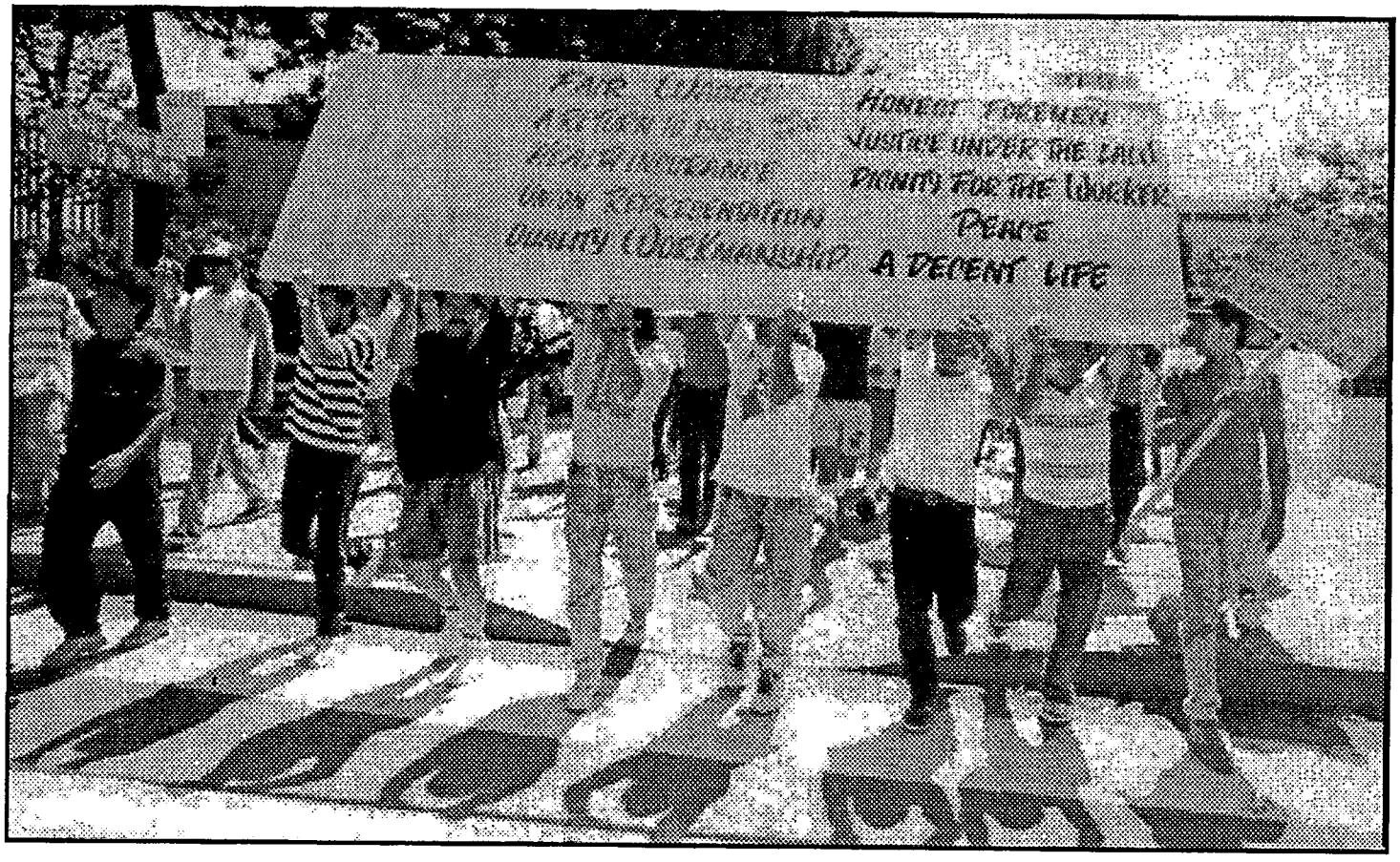
MARCH & RALLY

in support of

Striking Drywallers

ALLIED PRINTING TRADES UNION LABEL COUNCIL SAN DIEGO, CAL. 1



SATURDAY
JANUARY 23

12:00 Noon at Pantoja Park
Located on G St. between Kettner & State

Sponsored by: Justice for Drywallers Support Committee
For more information call Joe at 292-1046

Rally Endorsers: *(all union affiliations are for identification purposes only)*

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Solidarity
***Mika Spencer**, Labor Attorney*
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***C.T. Weber**, Calif. State Employees Association*
***Peter Zschiesche**, Bus. Rep. IAM Local Lodge 389*

Michael Goulding/The Orange County Regist

Drywall strikers picket the Days Inn in Fullerton, where contractors were meeting. Strikers want a union, health benefits and higher wage

Drywall workers' strike spreads

By Andre Mouchard
The Orange County Register

Threats of violence and vandalism increased Thursday as many striking drywall workers missed their first payday.

The strike, which began this month at isolated projects in Orange, San Diego and Riverside counties, spread Thursday to include most homebuilding sites in Southern California as about half of the estimated 4,000 drywall hangers in the region have agreed to stop working until they get higher pay and benefits.

Despite the upturn in strike activity, including a march in Fullerton by about 500 striking drywallers, representatives from both sides of the dispute said no negotiations are planned.

"It's completely up to the subcontractors right now. ... So far, we haven't been invited to the negotiating table," said Jesus Gomez, a Perris drywall hanger who has led the workers since November, when he started laying the groundwork for the strike.

But subcontractors who hire drywallers said negotiations with the non-union workers would legitimize the strike. Instead, subcontractors said they will begin talks when approached by leaders from the drywallers.

"Basically, we all realize something has to be done. But, without identification of who the leaders are in this thing, everybody is still fishing for how to get this thing resolved,"

First missed payday might spur violence

said Joe Hughes, vice president for Dutchman Drywall Inc.

The key issue in the strike is wages.

Drywall hangers are paid on a per-piece basis, earning about 5 cents a foot, or $10 to $12 an hour. Also, drywall hangers don't receive benefits.

In the early 1980s, when subcontractors hired unionized drywallers, wages were 9 cents a foot and most workers received health care.

Since then, despite a big upturn in home prices during the 1980s, drywallers haven't been recognized as a union and wages have declined.

With the squeeze to build cheaper homes, Hughes and other subcontractors said they don't expect a quick fix for the wage issue.

Any slowdown in resolving the dispute could cripple local homebuilders. Already, many area projects have been slowed by the strike. Others have been the targets of vandalism, including broken windows and kicked-in drywall in unfinished houses.

"This has already cost me a week's work," said Jeff Frost, president of the Frost Group, a Laguna Hills-based homebuilder.

At the same time, builders said threats of violence by strikers against non-striki drywallers have increased, though sever police departments and the Orange Coun Sheriff's Department said they haven't r ceived complaints related to the strike.

"The strikers are intimidating the no (striking) people," Frost said. "I've hear they followed them off of the freeway, slashe their tires and smashed their (car) windo in."

Because many of the drywallers, mostl Hispanic, live in apartment complexes in Sa ta Ana, Anaheim and Orange, Frost sai "Just with their presence, the threat is in plied."

Gomez said his group does not condone vi lence and added that he and other strike lea ers are urging others not to participate i intimidation or vandalism. But Gomez sai his group, not yet organized, can't contr every striker.

"It's really hard right now," Gomez sai "We've asked (the non-strikers) to join us gentlemen. When they don't, the people w are striking get mad because they are losi money to help everybody, including the pe ple who are still working."

Fullerton police Officer Don Pearce, wh watched as 500 drywallers picketed the sul contractor's meeting at the Days Inn Hotel i Fullerton, said the march was "organized an very peaceful."

BUSINESS

SUNDAY
JULY 5, 1992 C

ORANGE COUNT
Los Angeles Time

Hanging Tough

Roots Unite Striking Drywallers

By MICHAEL FLAGG
TIMES STAFF WRITER

ANAHEIM

Four hundred years ago, buccaneers roamed the Spanish Main, plundering galleons heavy with silver spewed out by the mines of Mexico's Guanajuato state. But now Guanajuato exports something entirely different. Men.

Over the past three decades, hundreds of men from one small village, El Maguey, have taken the 1,300-mile road north from central Mexico. Nearly all of them have gone into the same line of work: nailing up drywall for Southern California's housing industry.

Many of them are related. That blood link is a major reason why most of the drywall installers in Orange and San Diego counties have banded together to walk off the job, crippling the building industry. And those few hundred men are the core of the thousand drywall hangers who went on strike five weeks ago.

They are also among the 149 men who were arrested by sheriff's deputies Thursday and charged with kidnaping six strikebreakers from a construction site in Mission Viejo.

The men of El Maguey have organized this protest. They don't have a union; getting one is among their demands. A union would ensure that wages don't slip any further. Right now, they make about $300 a week; 10 years ago, when the business was unionized, drywall workers made twice that and more.

Most of the men are still Mexican citizens. But the struggle for a union shows that the men of El Maguey have learned the ways of the United States, just as earlier waves of Irish, Italian and German immigrants beat the system that exploited them by joining trade unions, running for public office, getting an education.

"When the first generation no longer fantasizes about going back to Mexico, that's the dividing line," said Marcelo Suarez Orozco, an anthropologist at UC San Diego who has studied emigration from Mexico.

"After a while, these men begin to compare themselves to American workers; they begin to think of themselves as 'hyphenated' Americans—as Mexican-Americans."

Most of the Mexican workers in the United States come from one of three states in central Mexico: Jalisco, Michoacan and Guanajuato.

El Maguey is a village of several thousand people, nestled in one of the many valleys of Guanajuato, a state of mile-high mountainsides and deep ravines north and west of Mexico City. El Maguey is named for a plant with long spiky leaves that grows around the town, a plant from which tequila is made.

There isn't much work in Mexico's rural villages. So it begins this way: One young man goes north, finds work, sends some money home, and soon more men join him. When they have a little money, they come back to the village to find a wife and take her north. So strong is the lure of the north that villages such as El Maguey are virtually devoid of young men.

In 1963, Juan Valadez came from El Maguey to Orange County and found work hanging drywall. Home builders were knocking houses together as fast as they could in the sunny days when California exploded with growth.

After a while, his three brothers joined him. The business, back then, was unionized, and the money was good, sometimes $350 a week if you worked from dawn to dusk. That was as much as $18,000 a year when a little ranch house cost $24,000 and a new Chevy Impala with all the options would set you back $3,500. It was enough to let you live a middle-class life and, as Valadez did, even put a couple of kids through Stanford University.

A lot of the money went back to El Maguey. Suddenly, there were new houses all over the village and people wearing American clothes.

Hanging drywall, though, is among the hardest, hottest jobs in construction. Drywall, or plasterboard, makes up the interior walls of a house; it usually comes in half-inch-thick slabs of paper and plaster 4 feet tall by 12 feet long and weighing more than a hundred pounds each.

Drywall hangers wrestle the slabs into position and nail them onto the house's wooden frame. The sheets are later taped, plastered and painted.

Hangers are paid a piece rate, that is, a man's wages depend on how many square feet of drywall he can hang. A skilled worker could race through a house back then, nailing up drywall as he went. It was easier and simpler because most houses were square, blocky affairs the old-timers called "dingbats," with none of the features common today: cathedral ceilings, say, or tricky arches, what's called a "cut-up" house.

MARK BOSTER / Los Angeles Times

Deputies explain to strikers that they'll be arrested if they refuse to move from road in Mission Viejo.

GINNY DIXON / Los Angeles Times

Protesters try to lure workers at job site June 11.

would soon take back any wage gains they have to offer to lure the men back to work. The contractors have done that twice before, the men say, the last time during a walkout in 1987.

Even though they began saving money and storing food weeks before the strike began June 1, those meager stockpiles are dwindling. At a borrowed union hall in Orange, donated beans and potatoes pour in from the local Latino community, and the men make beans and tortillas for each other at lunch each day to save money. In desperation, some of them have turned to trashing drywall and breaking windows in half-finished homes, fairly typical actions for a strike in the building industry.

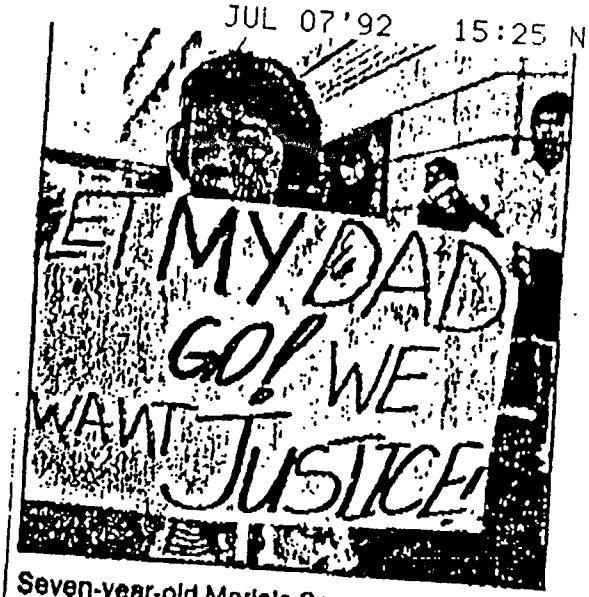
They won't, they say, go back to the old way.

"These men finally realize they have to get out of the underground economy," says Jesus Gomez, another El Maguey man and a leader of the strike. He started this whole affair in November when, he says, he got fed up with the system after a labor baron cheated him out of $60.

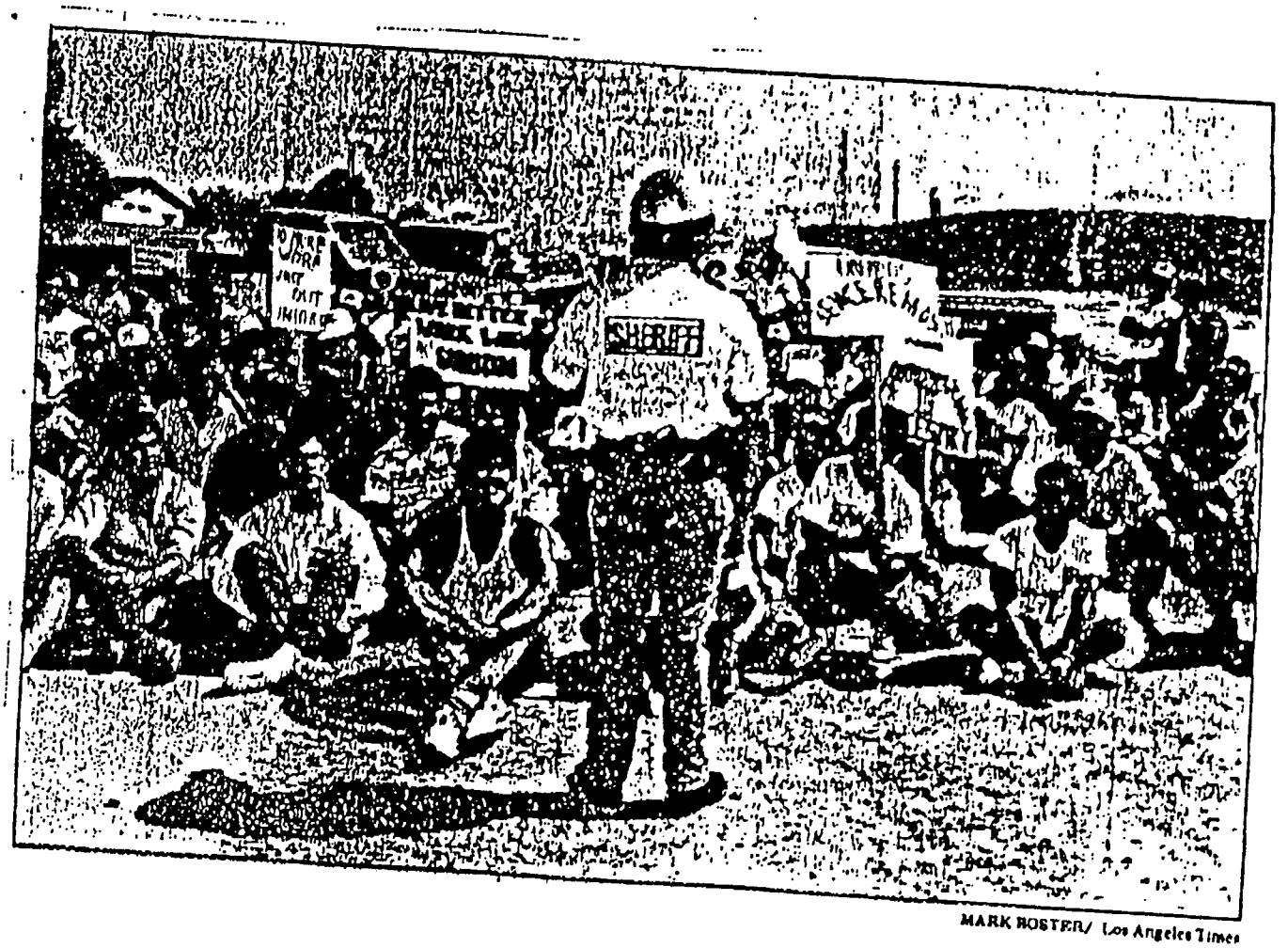
"There may be fewer jobs when all this is over, but at least they'll be decent ones," he says

As for the man who *really* started it all by being the first El Maguey man to get a job in the drywall industry, 54-year-old Juan Valadez has had his own small drywall company in Fullerton for the last five years.

"Why would I go back to Mexico now?" he says. "All my kids are here. This is where I live."



Seven-year-old Mariela Segura takes part in a protest at Orange County Jail, hoping to win her father's freedom. Protesters called for the release of 149 striking drywallers who were arrested Thursday by deputies after the men allegedly kidnaped workers from a construction site in Mission Viejo. A deputy, right, confronts strikers on Olympiad Road in Mission Viejo just before they were arrested Thursday.



MARK BOSTER/ Los Angeles Times

DRYWALLERS: Ethnic Roots Give Strikers an Uncommon Bond

Wages were high because the drywall companies all had unions, and with the housing market booming, the demand for skilled labor was brisk.

In the early 1980s, though, during the last recession, that began to change. Hard times meant that the home builders and their drywall subcontractors suddenly had a reason to bust the carpenters' unions, which represented the drywall hangers.

A flood of cheap labor from Mexico assured the drywall companies that they would have plenty of people hungry enough to replace the union workers. In just a few years, the residential drywall business had no unions at all.

Wages began to drop; the Anglo workers, who had once dominated the industry when it was unionized, left in droves and subcontractors replaced them with more men from El Maguey and elsewhere in Mexico who were more than willing to work for less. When drywall workers were in the union, one in four had been Mexican; afterward it was nine of 10.

Roy Navarro is typical of the men who came after 1982. Now 31, he was washing dishes and cooking in Chicago a decade ago, just as his father had done. (In fact, he is named for singing cowboy Roy Rogers, star of his father's favorite TV show in the 1950s.)

When Navarro came to Orange County to work drywall in the early 1980s, he made enough to support his family in Fullerton and send money to his widowed mother and three sisters in El Maguey.

Navarro and the other men—few of them high school graduates, some of them illiterate—also managed to make enough money to donate to the construction of a grand new church in the village. But as wages have dropped in the last few years, a lot less money has been going back to Mexico.

It's a hot, muggy weekday, and Navarro—one of the leaders of the current walkout—is parked in an Anaheim Hills shopping center scouting one of Southern California's hundreds of construction sites for signs of drywall being hung inside. If he sees anybody working, he'll go make a phone call, and picketers will suddenly roll up, 10 to a battered pickup truck, and begin chanting their slogan: "*Si, Se Puede!*"—"Yes, It Can Be Done!"

Across the street, a big white apartment building is under construction. There's another one behind it.

"I did that one," he nods at the finished building. "It was four or five years ago, and I got paid twice what these guys are making now for the same work.

"We're being squeezed to death," he says. "A guy I know, his wife left him when the money started drying up. Pretty soon we won't even be able to support our wives and kids."

As the housing market went off a cliff in 1989, the home builders began to pinch the subcontractors, who turned around and pinched wages so hard that even the low-paid Mexican workers began to complain.

It was their own people, some of them from El Maguey, even, who helped exploit them. The new non-union system created a group of labor brokers—or, as some people call them, "labor barons"—who rounded up Mexican workers and supplied them to the subcontractors.

The labor barons acted as go-betweens for the companies and the men. Often, the men say, the barons cheated them. And the barons often paid in cash, cheating the government out of income taxes, Social Security and workers' compensation payments too. The men had no benefits, no health insurance, no vacation, while the barons drove Mercedeses and lived in big homes.

"These guys control your shop," says Joe Sayatovich of Sayatovich Drywall Interiors in the San Diego County town of Lakeside, who says his company doesn't use any barons. "The guy says who works and who doesn't. He runs the whole show."

Construction—and the drywall business in particular—are notorious for paying cash.

"Cash pay is rampant, particularly in construction," said a 1989 report by the Orange County Human Relations Commission on the underground economy entitled "Zero Dollars Per Hour."

Cash pay means unscrupulous contractors can edge out their law-abiding competitors in bidding on jobs; it leaves workers with no insurance or pension; and it diverts as much as $2 billion in income tax alone from government coffers, the report estimates.

When there were still many Anglo workers in the business, drywall installers were a hard-drinking, hard-partying bunch, and it was common for men to be paid not only in cash but in drugs, such as cocaine, the Human Relations Commission report says.

The state Employment Development Department and the federal Internal Revenue Service launched, with great fanfare, an investigation of cash payments in the drywall industry in Southern California in 1989. But little came of it.

"We've never been able to get the support of the industry to clean this problem up," says Loren Ferguson, an administrator in the tax enforcement section.

"And short of auditing everybody, getting some support is the only way we're going to be able to do it."

There's another irony in all this: With the walkout a month old, the subcontractors are bringing onto their job sites still more Mexicans. These are men who have been washing dishes for even less money than drywall hanging pays and who have never hung drywall in their life. The subcontractors also say they're recruiting experienced drywall hangers from Northern California and other states.

As the strike wears on into a second month, both sides remain far apart, circling warily to see who will cave in first. The drywall companies adamantly refuse to recognize a union again, and the men refuse to go back to work without one.

Drywallers reject offer; no end seen to walkout

By L. ERIK BRATT
Staff Writer

Nearly 500 non-unionized drywall workers yesterday rejected a wage increase offered by local subcontractors, dashing hopes of an end to a work stoppage that has halted construction on dozens of residential projects countywide.

The predominantly Hispanic group of drywall hangers and tapers voted down the proposal by a 295-183 margin at the end of a four-hour meeting at the Silver Gate Masonic Temple & Lodge on Utah Street in North Park, said labor representative Tomas Garcia.

The vote indicates that drywallers will likely continue the walkout they started June 1, when some 1,800 laborers put down their tools in protest of low wages and the lack of health benefits.

Hearing the outcome of the vote, a representative for some 25 local subcontractors said the group will begin recruiting workers from Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona and other locations nationwide.

Joe Sayatovich of Sayatovich Drywall Interiors said the subcontractors are still willing to bargain, although they believe the package they put on the table contains a fair wage increase given the tough economic times.

The subcontractors met with labor representatives Monday and offered to boost immediately the wages of drywall hangers from 5.5 cents per square foot to 6.5 cents, followed by another half-cent increase in October.

The employers also want to establish a job hotline, an apprentice program and a labor relations committee. The group is willing to talk about health benefits, but avoids the issue of overtime pay.

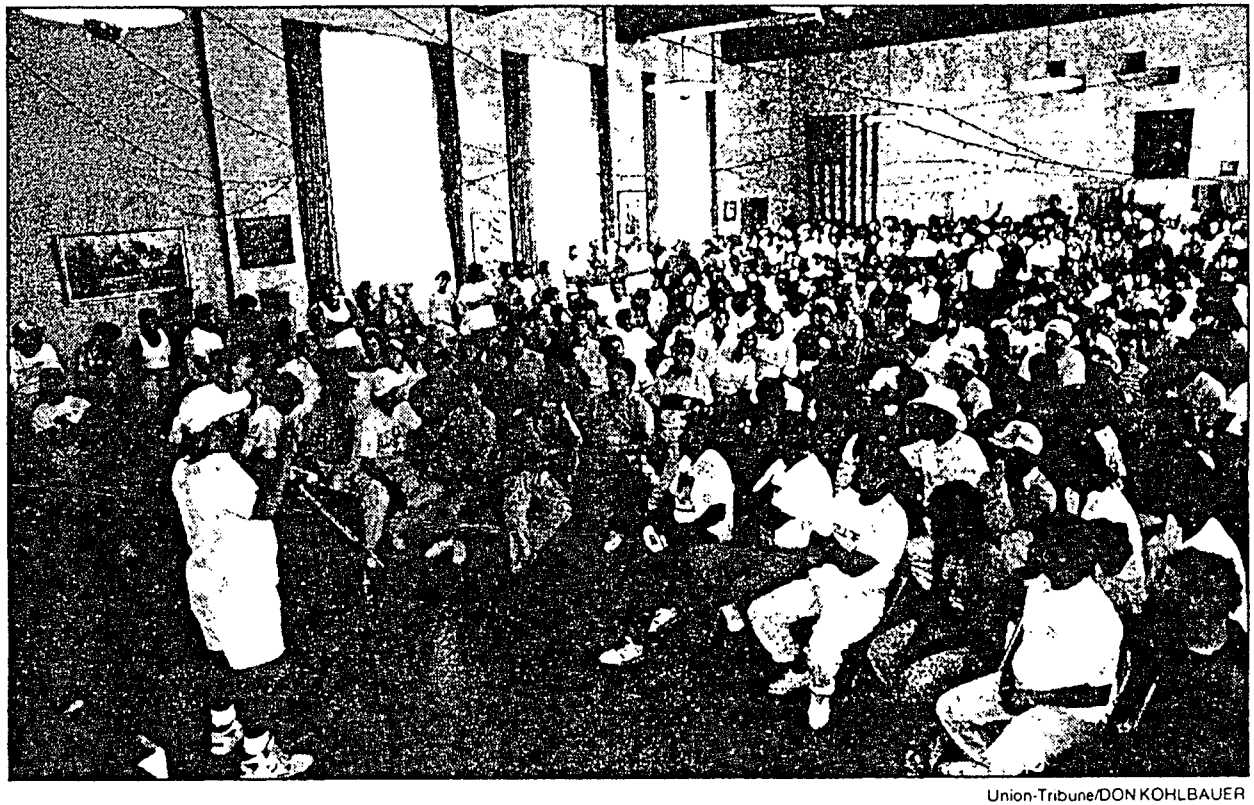
Drywallers, though, say they want at least 8 cents a square foot.

"We are simple workers who want fair wages," said labor representative Tony Hernandez during the meeting yesterday.

The gathering turned quite raucous at time as strikers and non-strikers and Hispanics and Anglos packed in a small amphitheater for the vote. The manager of the Masonic Temple said people attending the meeting broke three tables and tracked cement through the structure.

Sayatovich said the subcontractors talked about boosting wages to 8 cents per square foot for drywall hangers, and the labor leaders rejected it. This leaves subcontractors to believe a local Carpenters Union is playing a big part in the strike.

However, Hernandez said he is not representing union interests, only those of the workers. Officials for the Los Angeles Carpenters District Council were not available for comment yesterday.



Union-Tribune/DON KOHLBAUER

Money's the issue: *Organizer Tony Hernandez, speaking to non-unionized drywall installers before yesterday's vote, criticizes a wage increase offered by their employers.*

Workers picket building site

By Linda Tontini
Staff Writer

SAN MARCOS — Sheriff's deputies were summoned to a building site here Tuesday after picketing drywall hangers allegedly threatened construction workers and kicked a truck.

But sheriff's deputy J. Miller said everything appeared peaceful when deputies arrived at the Discovery Hills construction project on Applewilde Drive around 11:11 a.m. Miller said deputies were unable to substantiate a reported incident of a picketer waving a gun.

For more than three weeks, non-union drywall workers have been protesting at various building sites around the county in an effort to win better wages and benefits. Some 40 protesters marched in a circle in front of the San Marcos site with signs in Spanish and English until they dispersed about 12:30 p.m.

The workers are protesting various drywall contractors in the county for paying low wages. For the past three weeks, the mostly Latino workers have driven to different construction sites to convince drywallers still on the job to join the fight.

"We want to raise the prices to make better wages," said Luciano Salazar, spokesman for protesting drywallers. "We want health insurance. We need it for our families. It's not enough to make $350 to $400 a week for 60 hours of work."

A security guard for the construction site, Rob Hebbert, said he called the sheriff's department when picketers shouted at workers and an argument broke out that ended with a truck being kicked.

Bob Bentley, foreman for CNR Dry Wall, said that he has 13 men at the Discovery Hills job, and some were threatened by strikers. He told the men they could go home early if they feared for their safety.

➤ See Picket, Page B-5

Picket

➤From Page B-1

"They told them they would beat up their wives and kids," Bentley said. "They said they would break windows in their houses, and it scares them because a lot of them know the picketers."

Salazar said that protesters just talked to working drywallers through a chain-link fence and never threatened anyone. He admitted, however, that one angry protester kicked a truck after the driver leapt from the cab, photographed protesters and called one of them a "son of a bitch."

Bentley alleged that the protesters are union-backed, a charge that protesters have denied all along. William Grootonk, special representative for the Southern California District Council of Carpenters, has said the union merely is monitoring the situation.

"We don't want anybody in the union to tell us how to do it," Salazar said. He added, however, that workers were interested in being unionized.

Drywall workers are paid piecework, and workers claimed they were paid as little as 3.5 cents per square foot. An industry insider who declined to be named agreed that workers were being paid "brutal, slave wages."

Salazar said that some companies have offered raises up to 6.5 cents per square foot, but workers rejected the raise because it was not high enough. Prices have not gone up for 10 years, Salazar said, and workers are hoping to receive 8 cents per square foot.

Presley Construction is the builder of Discovery Hills. Will Pfau, vice president of construction, declined to comment on the protest.

Get Involved!

Join the Justice for Drywallers Support Committee

Thousands of non-unionized drywall workers in Southern California have been on strike since the beginning of June. They are fighting for union recognition, for decent wages and for health benefits for themselves and their families.

The strikers have faced constant harassment and violence from the police and scabs, as well as attacks in the media. They need the help of all those sympathetic to their cause if this important strike is to be won.

How you can help

- Please make a financial contribution to the strike. Send contributions to Drywallers' Fund, P.O. Box 232713, Encinitas, CA 92023. Write checks to: Antonio Hernandez (Memo: Drywallers' Fund).
- Donations of food (especially baby food), children's clothing, diapers, etc. are much needed. They can be brought to the Justice for Drywallers office (address and phone number below).
- Raise the issue in your union and ask them to endorse the strike.
- Write letters to the local media supporting the strike.
- Join the Justice for Drywallers Support Committee (see below), which is building labor, community and student support for the Justice for Drywallers movement.

The next meeting of the Justice for Drywallers Support Committee is on Wednesday, August 12 at 6:00pm at the Justice for Drywallers office. We will be showing a video ("Sí Se Puede! Yes We Can!") about the successful Justice for Janitors campaign in L.A., and there will be a discussion of future work of the committee.

The Justice for Drywallers office is located at the old Carpenters' Hall, 4665 Mercury between Balboa and Clairemont Mesa Blvd., just east of Route 805. Call 495-7023 for more information.

Participén!

Unase al Justicia para Drywallers Comité de Apoyo

Miles de trabajadores de drywall no pertenecientes a ningun sindicato, en el sur de california an estado en huelga desde junio ellos estan peleando por pertencer aun sindicato (union) por un salario decente beneficios medicos para ellos y su famalia

Los huelguistas se an enfrentado a bastante abuso de la polica y esquiroles y ataques de parte de prensa y television. Necesitomos tu apoyo, si consideras esto una causa justa, unete a esta huelga se.

Como Puedes Ayudar

- Cualquier ayuda monetaria para: Drywallers' Fund, P.O. Box 232713, Encinitas, CA 92023. Cheques a nombre de Antonio Hernandez (Memo: Drywallers' Fund).
- Donaciones de comida (especialmente comida para bebitos) ropa zapetas etc.
- Levante el tema con la union y preguntent patrocine la huegla.
- Escribe cartas a la prensa local como apoyo para los huelgistas.
- Unete al Justicia para Drywallers Comité de Apoyo (vea abado) que es trabajadores de construcción la comunidad y estudiantes por Justicia para Drywallers.

La proxima Junta de Justicia para Drywallers Comité de Apoyo es el Miercoles 12 de Agosto alas 6:00pm en las oficinas del movimiento bamos a presentar una pelicula acerca de Justicia para Afanadores que fue todo un exito en su campaña para formar una union en Los Angeles, bamos a discutir los siguientes trabajos del comité.

La oficcina de Justicia para Drywallers esta localizada en 4665 Mercury entre Balboa y Clairemont Mesa Blvd., al este de la carretera 805, o al oeste de la salida Balboa por el 163. El telefono es 495-7023.

12 August 1992

Letters Editor
Socialist Worker
P.O. Box 82
London E3 3LH
England

Dear *Socialist Worker*:

Since the beginning of June, several thousand non-unionized, mainly Mexican, drywall construction workers have been on strike throughout southern California.

Over the past decade, the level of exploitation in the construction industry has risen dramatically, with sharply falling wages and longer working hours.

The strikers have organized themselves into Justice for Drywallers and are demanding union recognition, a livable wage and health benefits for themselves and their families.

The strike has been spread by flying pickets and is based on mass rank-and-file involvement.

But the strikers have been met with repeated acts of harassment and violence from employers, scabs and the police.

Scabs have threatened picketers with guns on several occasions, and dozens of strikers have been arrested or sent to the hospital as a result of attacks by the police.

Nevertheless, the strike remains solid with strong community support. A rally in San Diego recently drew over 500 people to support the strike and protest police brutality.

The drywallers' strike, like the LA rebellion in April and May, is another indication that working people in the US are not prepared to pay the price of the bosses' economic crisis.

The example of the strike can convince others that the way to fight back is through "old-fashioned" trade-union militancy.

JOE ALLEN, PHIL GASPER
San Diego, California

(Messages of support can be sent to: Justice for Drywallers, P.O. Box 232713, Encinitas, CA 92023, USA.)

JUSTICE FOR DRYWALLERS
495-7023

August 16, 1992

Mr. Norm Bell
United Food & Commercial Workers
2001 Camino del Rio South
San Diego, CA 92108

RE: Financial assistance for the Striking Drywallers
to be decided at the upcoming Labor Council meeting.

Dear Mr. Bell:

We don't know whether you have heard the news or not about the Southern California Drywall Strike. An estimated 6,000 to 8,000 non-union drywall workers have been on strike since June 1st, 1992 and have effectively shut down between 85 and 90 percent of residential projects in Southern California. This strike is unique; in that, nothing like it is happening anywhere else in the country. This is a massive grassroots movement the likes of which have not been seen for at least the last twenty years.

David Sickler, AFL-CIO regional director, has encouraged local unions and labor councils to lend support to the Striking Drywallers. We are asking that, at the upcoming Labor Council meeting on 8/26/92, you support the motion seeking financial assistance for the Striking Drywallers.

For those of us who are involved with The Drywall Strike, we believe this is a pivotal labor struggle, one that could very well have far reaching implications beyond San Diego County and Southern California. This strike is certainly one that can and should be won. We hope that we can count on your full cooperation. We would also like to have the benefit of your experience, your judgment, and your suggestions and this is why we invite you to take part in the ongoing efforts of the Strike Support Committee. Also any support that your organization can provide is greatly appreciated. Donations of food and clothing are still being accepted at 4665 Mercury Street in Kearny Mesa. For directions or more information please call (619) 495-7023.

Thank you for your consideration.
In solidarity,

Tony Hernandez
Sec/Justice For Drywallers

Joe Allen
Strike Support Committee

LOOK OUT!

HOME BUYERS BEWARE!

PRICES OF HOMES HAVE FALLEN!

NEW HOME BUYERS ARE HAVING TREMENDOUS PROBLEMS.

IN A SLOW MARKET DEVELOPERS HAVE HAD TO CUT CORNERS.

SO. CALIFORNIA DEVELOPERS HAVE MADE MANY CUTS. THE BIGGEST ONE IS IN QUALITY!

* **HOMES ARE LEAKING**
* **HOMES ARE CRACKING**
* **HOMES ARE SINKING**

HOMES ARE NO LONGER BUILT BY CRAFTSMEN, THEY ARE BEING BUILT BY DAY LABORERS WITH NO FORMAL TRAINING OR SKILLS!

DEMAND QUALITY

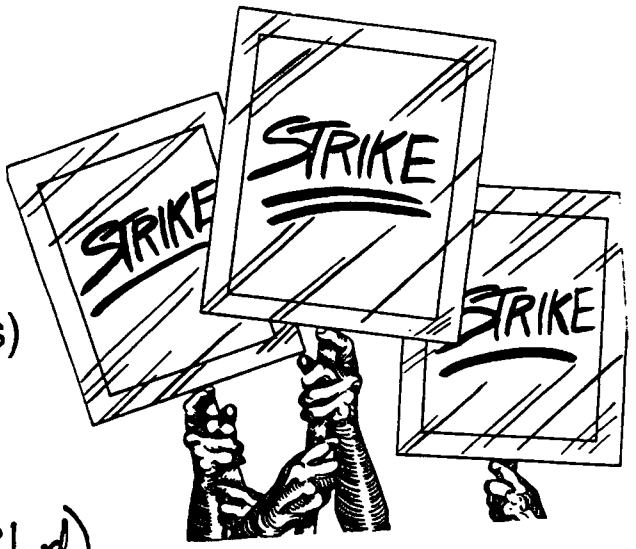
YOU DESERVE THE BEST

Every Thursday
7-9 AM

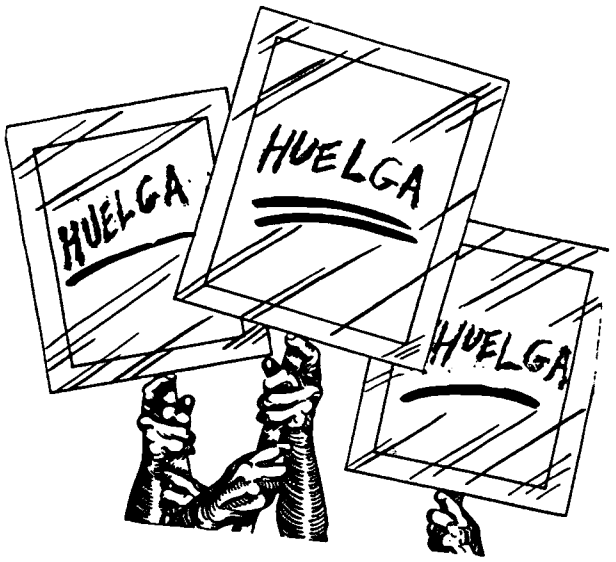
at A.B.C.

(central hiring hall for scabs)

located at:
4152 30th St.
(near El Cajon Blvd)



Weekly Demonstration to support the Drywall Strikers



Since June 1st, thousands of non-union Mexican drywall workers (who form Justice for Drywallers) have been on strike in southern California. They have effectively shut down the residential construction industry in a fight for union rights, a living wage and health benefits for themselves and their families.

The drywallers face police brutality, racist attacks from their employers and lies in the media. These are daily facts of life in the Mexican and African American communities of California.

Picket

of

Great Western Drywall

Demands:

- Union recognition for Justice for Drywallers
- Stop police and scab violence against strikers

Time: 4:00 p.m.
Date: Friday, August' 14
Place: Great Western Drywall office
8305 Miralani Drive

(805 north to Miramar Rd east and left on Cabot to Miralani,
or 15 north to Miramar Rd west and right on Cabot to Miralani)

All strikers and supporters welcome
For more info call: 495-7023

sponsored by
Justice for Drywallers &
Justice for Drywallers Support Committee

Demonstracion

contra

Great Western Drywall

Demandas:

- Reconcer nuestra union Justicia para Drywallers
- Para la policia y esquivoles violentos contra los huelgistas

Hora: 4:00 p.m.
Fecha: Viernes, Agosto 14
Lugar: Oficina de Great Western Drywall
8315 Miralani Drive

(805 norte hasta Miramar Rd este, izquierda en Cabot hasta Miralani, o 15 norte hasta Miramar Rd o'este, drecha en Cabot hasta Miralani)

Todos los huelgistas y gente que apoye bien venidos
Para mas informacion : 495-7023

patrosinada por
Justicia para Drywallers &
Justicia para Drywallers Comité de Apoyo

JUSTICE FOR DRYWALLERS SUPPORT COMMITTEE

Contact: Joe Allen
292-1046

Tony Hernandez
495-7023

January 18, 1993

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RALLY & MARCH IN SUPPORT OF STRIKING DRYWALLERS
January 23, 12 noon-3 pm, Pantoja Park

SAN DIEGO—The Justice for Drywallers Support Committee of San Diego is sponsoring a rally and march on Saturday, January 23. The rally, which will begin at 12 noon in Pantoja Park (on G Street between Kettner and State), will publicize the continuing struggle of drywall workers in San Diego County for union recognition and decent working conditions.

Drywallers across southern California formed Justice for Drywallers and went on strike for their demands last June. In Los Angeles and Orange Counties the strike culminated in victory last November when contractors agreed to sign a contract recognizing drywallers as members of the Carpenters Union. In San Diego County, however, contractors have refused to sign a similar contract and the strike continues.

The rally and march will highlight the drywallers' demands and demonstrate the breadth of community support for their struggle. Speakers will include local members of Justice for Drywallers, members of the strike support committee and other labor activists.

For more information, contact Joe Allen (Justice for Drywallers Support Committee, 292-1046) or Tony Hernandez (Secretary, Justice for Drywallers, 495-7023).

-30-

COMITE DE APOYO DE LOS DRYWALLERS

Contactos: Joe Allen
292-1046

Tony Hernandez
495-7023

18 de Enero 1993

BOLETIN DE PRENSA

MARCHA Y MITIN EN APAYO A LOS TRABAJADORES DE DRYWALL EN HUELGA

23 de Enero, 12:00 pm a 3 pm, Parque Pantoja

SAN DIEGO—El Comite de Apoyo a la campana de Justicia para los Drywallers esta organizando una marcha y manifestación el dia sábado, 23 de enero. La manifestación que se llevará acabo a las 12 del mediodía en el parque Pantoja (se encuentra en la Calle G entre Kettner y State) publicará la lucha continua de trabajadores de drywall en el Condado de San Diego para reconocimiento sindical y condiciones laborales decentes.

Trabajadores de drywall por todo el sur de California formaron Justicia para Drywallers y comenzaron una huelga para sus demandas a partir del junio pasado. En los Condados de Los Angeles y Orange le huelga culminó en victoria el noviembre pasado cuando contratistas se pusieron de acuerdo en firmar un contrato reconociendo a los trabajadores como miembros del sindicato de carpinteros. Sin embargo, en San Diego, los contratistas han negado firmar un contracto similar y la huelga sigue.

La marcha y manifestación enfatizarán lás demandas de los trabajadores y demostrarán la profundidad del apoyo comunitario por su lucha. Los ponentes incluirán miembros locales del Justicia para los Trabajadores de Drywall, miembros del comité en apoyo de la huelga, y otros activistas laborales.

-30-

Picket

of

Great Western Drywall

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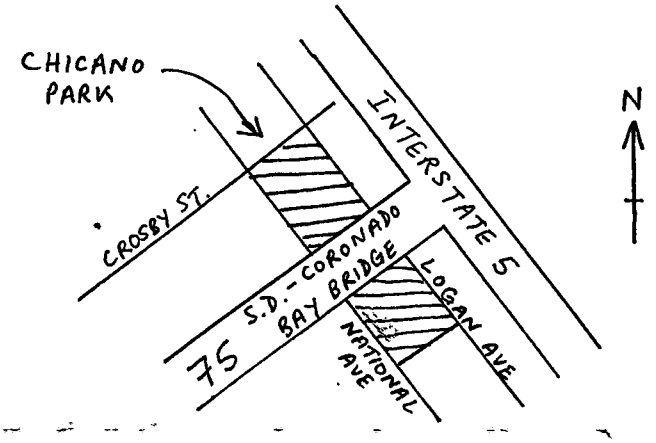
All strikers and supporters welcome
For more info call: 495-7023

sponsored by
Justice for Drywallers &
Justice for Drywallers Support Committee

The striking drywallers need your financial support. Please send checks to: Drywallers' Fund P.O. Box 232713 Encinitas, CA 92023 Write checks to : Antonio Hernandez (Memo: Drywallers' Fund)	This event is organized by Justice for Drywallers (619-495-7023) and the Justice for Drywallers Support Committee (619-474-0489 or 619-292-1046). Endorsed by: Central America Information Center; Interfaith Task Force on Central America; US-Cuba Friendship Society; Friends of Nicaraguan Culture; CISPES; Casa Nicaraguense de Espanol; Hermandad Mexicana Nacional; International Socialist Organization; Union de Lucha del Pueblo

Rally and march in solidarity with drywall strikers and against police brutality—Saturday, August 8, 1992, Noon, Chicano Park (National Avenue/Crosby Street).



Central America Information Center
P.O. Box 50211
San Diego, CA 92165
(619) 583-2925

BULK RATE
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PAID
Permit No. 1628
San Diego, CA

ASSAMBLEA

en Solidaridad con los Drywallers en Huelga & contra la brutalidad policial

SABADO, 8 DE AGOSTO A LOS DOCE EN CHICANO PARK

(National Avenue y Crosby Street)

DESPUÉS MARCHA HACIA EL EDIFICIO DE LA POLICIA

Después junio 1, algunos milles de colgadores (drywall workers) estan en huegla en todo el sur de California. Han logrado a cerrar las construcciones residencial en una lucha por el derecho de organizar un sindicato, para sueldos justos y para beneficios de salud para ellos y sus familias.

Los drywallers tienen que defenderse contra la brutalidad policial, la Migra y contra attaques de sus jefes y mentiras de la prensa. La brutalidad policial que sufren los huelgistas se pasa día por día en las communicades mexicanas y afro-americanas en California.

Estamos buscando la solidaridad de todos los militantes trabajadores, estudiantes y progressistas pasa mostrar el apoyo el más grande con los huelgistas valientes. Todos ustedes son invitados a compatir en esta lucha participando en la marcha el ocho de agosto. Para más informacion, por favor llama „Justicia para los Drywallers": (619)-495-7023.

Apoyado por: Justicia para los Drywallers & Comité de Apoyo para los Justicia para los Drywallers

RALLY

in Solidarity with Drywall Strikers

& MARCH

Against Police Brutality

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, NOON
CHICANO PARK
MARCH TO POLICE H.Q.

Since June 1st over one thousand non-union Mexican drywall workers have been on strike through-out southern California. They have effectively shut-down the residential construction industry in their fight for union recognition, a living wage and health benefits themselves and their families.

The drywallers have faced police brutality, INS deportations and harassment, racist attacks from their employers and lies in the media. The brutality and harassment that the strikers have received from the police and INS is a daily fact of life in the Mexican and African-American communities of California.

We are asking all unionists and community, student and progressive activists to show their solidarity with the drywall strikers and against police and INS harassment at our August 8th rally and march. For more information call Justice for Drywallers:495-7023.

Sponsored by: Justice for Drywallers & Justice for Drywallers Support Committee

MARCH

AGAINST THE BRUTALITY OF THE POLICE AND THE INS

AND FOR

SUPPORT OF THE DRY-WALLERS ON STRIKE.

*SATURDAY-NOON, AUGUST 8, 1992
PLACE: CHICANO PARK AND MARCH TO THE POLICE STATION.

FOR:

* DENOUNCE THE ~~UNCOUNTABLE~~ DAILY VIOLATIONS AGAINST OUR HUMAN RIGHTS BY THE POLICE AND THE INS.
* JUSTICE FOR THE RIVERA FAMILY.
* SUPPORT THE DRY-WALLER'S STRIKE FOR FAIR PAY AND MEDICAL COVERAGE.
* DEFEND THE STRIKERS FROM POLICE ATTACKS.

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Sponsored by: Justice for Drywallers & Justice for Drywallers Support Committee

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS

LANE KIRKLAND
PRESIDENT

THOMAS R. DONAHUE
SECRETARY — TREASURER

REGION NO. 6 DAVID SICKLER, DIRECTOR
611 SOUTH SHATTO PLACE, SUITE 400
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90005
TEL. (213) 387-1974
FAX: (213) 387-3525

July 13, 1992

TO: All Unions and Councils

FROM: David Sickler, Director AFL-CIO Region VI

RE: **STRIKING DRY WALLERS**

From the Mexican border to Ventura, hundreds of non-union dry wallers are striking for the right to be Union.

These valiant strikers were once Union a decade ago and made twice as much as they earn now. They are only paid $300.00 a week for 60 hours work. Needless to say they don't have health care or other basic necessities.

They began organizing themselves last November and went on strike June 1, 1992. They desperately need our help! As their strike grows in strength and momentum, they need financial support to assist with their rents, utilities and food.

Because they are constantly harassed and jailed, they also need legal assistance. We encourage you to ask your union attorney to volunteer Pro-Bono assistance. We all have a stake in their struggle to form a Union.

Please donate to the "DRY WALLERS STRIKE FUND" and mail your check to the AFL-CIO Region VI Office; 611 Shatto Place - Suite #400; Los Angeles, CA 90005 If your attorney can assist, please call Miguel Caballero at (213) 738-8000 at CIWA headquarters.

Thank you for your support.

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General Executive Board
Eighth District
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Si Se Puedes!
Yes, We Can Do It!

Photo courtesy of *The Register*

Los Angeles Times Photo

Above, striking drywallers show determination after police arrested more than 150. Right, strikers demonstrate their demands.

Demanding a union, a contract, and a living wage, drywall workers in Southern California are standing firm.

Some 4,000 striking drywallers and tapers across Southern California have shut down residential housing from Ventura to the Mexican border for more than four months now.

Demanding health insurance and that their wages be returned to 1982 levels—they have been working for half of that—the self-organized independents are also holding out for a contract and a union.

Militantly calling other workers off the jobs, the strikers have stood firm in the face of legal threats by union-busting lawyers, intimidation by a small army of security guards, and mass arrests by police.

They have won increasing support from organized labor and the community at large. Indeed, the strike has compelled the surprised attention of the major players in this profitable Southern California industry—the billion-dollar developers.

(As we go to press, a major drywall contractor has entered into serious negotiations to end the strike, and others are moving to do so, too.)

Having made union halls available to the strikers and given them moral support, the Brotherhood has made it clear it will be happy to represent them if they request it.

Photos by Slobodan Dimitrov

"Just when people are telling us that workers won't stand up for themselves, here come some of the most poorly paid and draw a line in the sand," says UBC General President Sig Lucassen.

"They're there every morning of every day. They picket together. They rally together. Their families rally. They go to jail together, holding out for a written contract, health care, a livable wage.

"These guys don't expect somebody else to do it for them. They're knocking on the door, and the trade-union movement—the Brotherhood included—will be dead in the water unless it brings them in."

recession began, they began to cut even those rates, from eight or nine cents a square foot to four or five.

"I used to make $700 a week working from Friday to Monday," recalls one drywaller who remembers what it was to be union. "Now, to make at least $250, you have to work six days at least."

The agents for driving the rates down and the hours up were often the *patrones*—labor brokers, mostly Latino, who round up a crew and deliver it to a contractor.

"If a company was paying eight cents a square foot, the *patron* says, 'I'll do it for seven.'" explains Gomez. And "the *patrones* were taking advantage of the guys who were coming from Mexico. They were stealing money from them.

Forty-seven men showed up at the first meeting where the drywallers are now spending a dozen hours a day, the UBC Local 2361 meeting hall in Orange.

Those who came initially were all from Orange County, most of them with ties to the same small town in Mexico, El Maquey, in Guanajuato state. Many had been in the union before it was broken, Gomez among them.

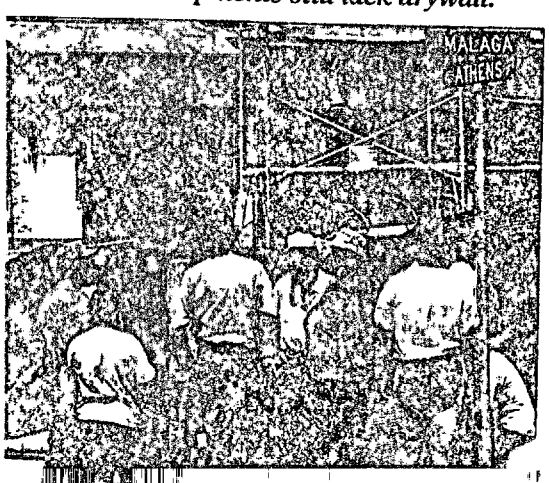
They started meeting in November. By June, 400 to 500 men were coming to the weekly meetings from five Southern California counties and a multitude of backgrounds.

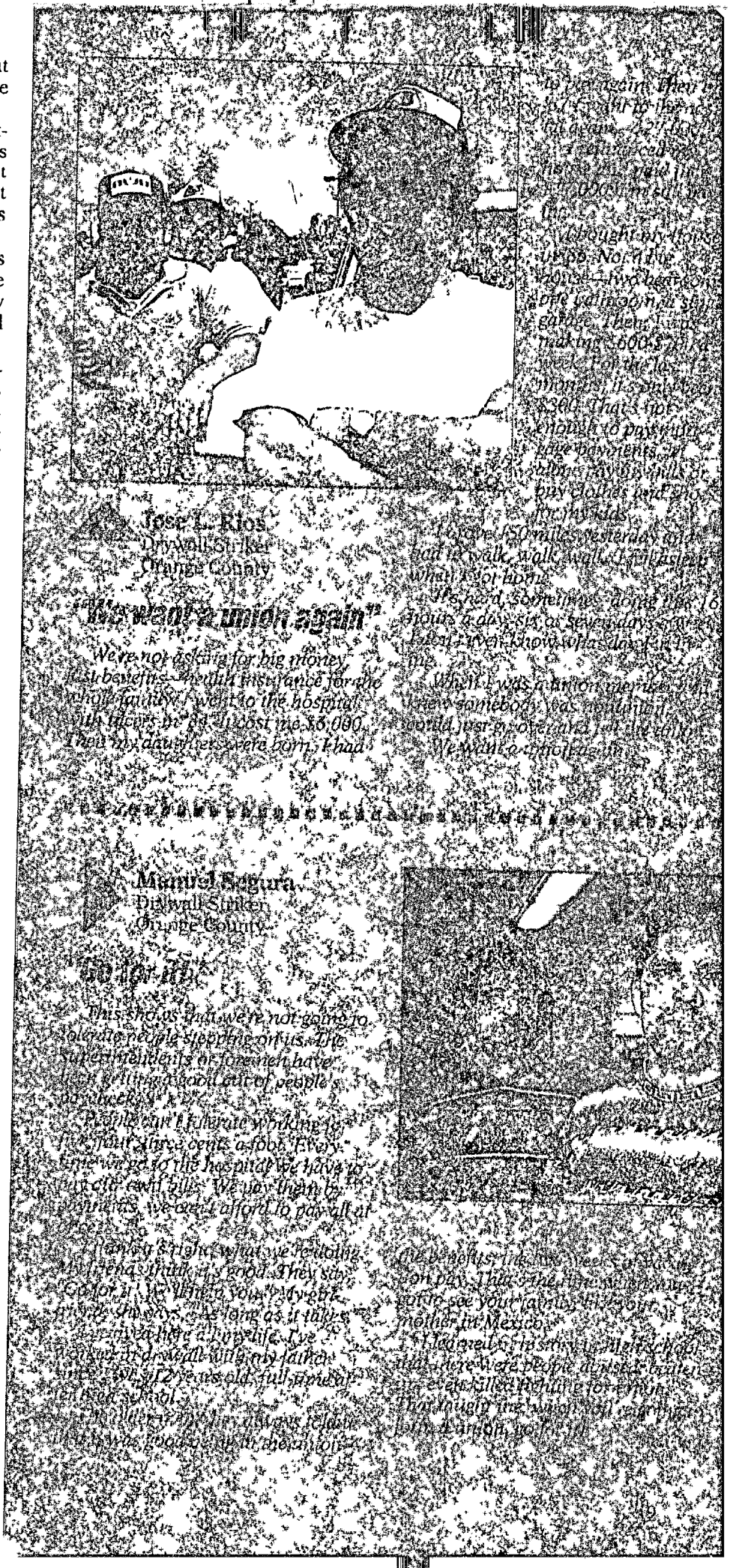
The drywallers say they planned their strike carefully. "We knew it was going to be hard," says Gomez.

It would be hard to put aside enough money to strike effectively. "But we been suffering for the past two years," says Gomez. "We can suffer a while longer."

And after their disappointment in the wildcat of 1987, they knew they would have to hold out to get a contract and organize a union.

Ready for stucco, picketed developments still lack drywall.





Jose L. Rios
Drywall Striker
Orange County

"We want a union again"

We're not asking for big money ... benefits ... health insurance for the whole family. I went to the hospital with ulcers. It cost me $6,000. Then my daughters were born. I had

Manuel Segura
Drywall Striker
Orange County

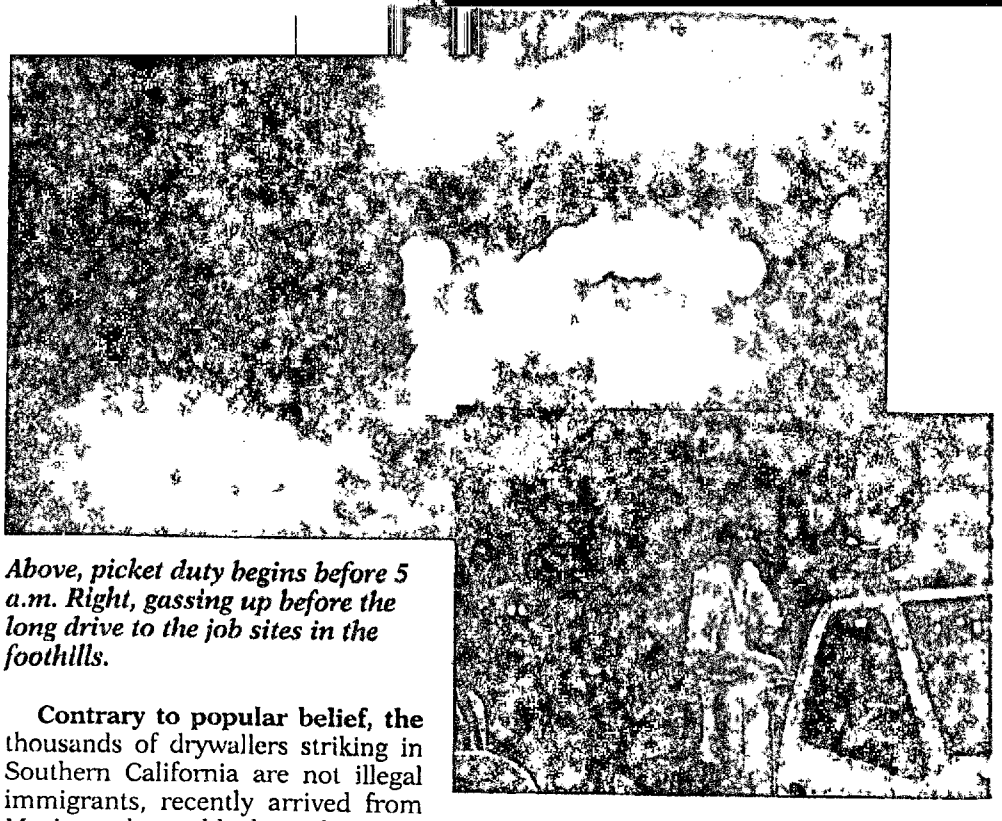
"We want a union again"

This shows that we're not going to tolerate people stepping on us. The superintendents or foremen have been getting a good cut of people's paychecks.

People are working for four cents a foot. Every time we go to the hospital we have to take care of it. We pay them by piecework, we can't afford to pay all at

[illegible] right what we're doing. Mujeres y hijos, it's good. They say 'Go for it.' We have to [illegible] ... as long as it takes ... [illegible] ... life. I've been in drywall with my father ... 12 years old, full time ... [illegible] ... always told ... [illegible] ... in the union ...

*[illegible] ... to [illegible] ... [illegible] ... [illegible] ...



Above, picket duty begins before 5 a.m. Right, gassing up before the long drive to the job sites in the foothills.

Contrary to popular belief, the thousands of drywallers striking in Southern California are not illegal immigrants, recently arrived from Mexico, who suddenly took it into their minds to strike.

Many are permanent, longtime, legal residents. They are married and own their own homes, where they are raising families of Mexican-American kids, some of them now old enough to be entering college.

They are led by a large core of men in their 30s and 40s, who had spent as many as 15 years in the Brotherhood before the early '80s.

Then, during the Reagan recession, Southern California developers broke the unions in residential housing—first hiring low-wage, nonunion carpenters from right-to-work states, then using Latino workers.

At first the drywallers did not suffer much. Wages remained high and work, in the mid-80s boom years, was plentiful. They lost their benefits—pensions, vacations, health. Then, without raises, their take-home pay bought less in the supermarket.

When residential housing began its slide two years ago, contractors began pushing wages *below* 1982 levels. Drywallers worked longer hours, just to keep up. Contractors made it clear that Saturday work, sometimes Sunday work, was expected.

Safety measures—cleaning the sites of nails and debris before the drywall was hung—fell by the wayside. The contractors stopped paying overtime. Wages went down even further—to less than half what had been being paid when they were union.

In desperation, some began looking for work at only slightly better wages in nonunion commercial.

Along the way, the drywallers learned that wildcat strikes would not bring back union wages and conditions. Though drywall contractors quickly raised wages during a two-week wildcat that swept Orange County in 1987, they dropped them again within a couple of months, when the drywallers went back to work without a contract.

It was a lesson well learned by the men who have brought residential construction in five Southern California counties to a halt.

Having broken the union in residential housing in the early 1980s —and segregated Mexican from Anglo carpenters — Southern California's big developers apparently thought there was no fight left. Early in the drywallers' strike one of their representatives told reporters it would be over "in a couple of weeks."

"These guys just can't believe that we could do this on our own," says Jesus Gomez, a 17-year drywall veteran in his 40s, whose calm demeanor reveals the bedrock of seriousness and determination that underlies the strike's high spirits.

It was Gomez's shorted paychecks—"$60 dollars taken out, every week for three weeks"—that were the straw that broke the camel's back. He said, "I'm tired of this," and called a meeting, he explains.

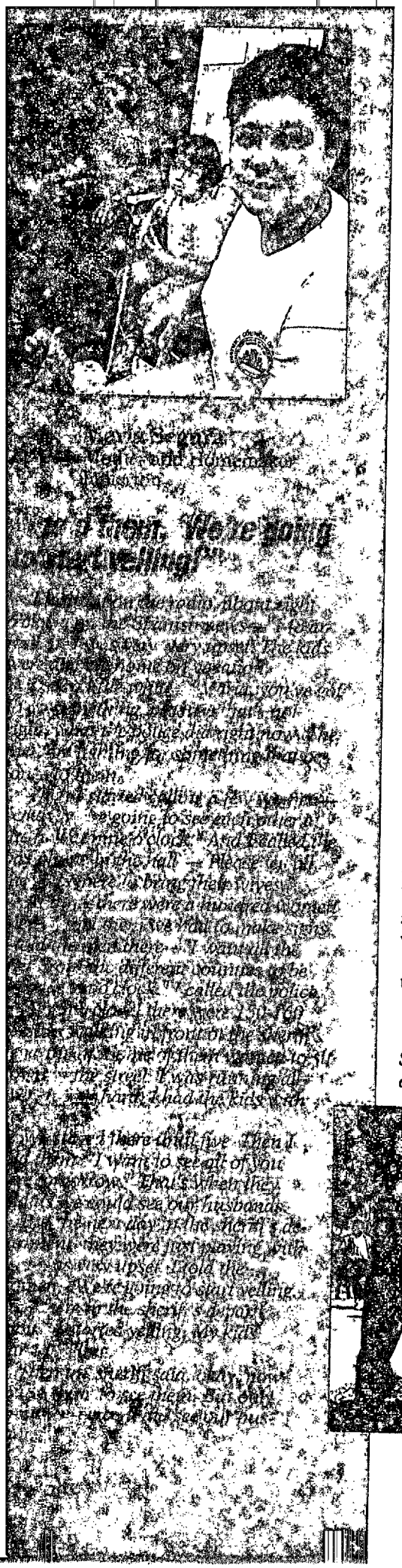
Contractors had not raised the rates for the drywallers since they drove the union out in the early '80s. When the

Mike Otis
Business Representative
Local 2361

"The most committed group..."

These guys get here between 4:00 and 4:30 every morning. They sign in—they're really checking people around here. They're not going back to sleep. They do their picket duty, they come back and plan the next day's activities. ... It's the most committed group ... in my career.

Most of these guys are Mexican immigrants. Some of them came up recently. But a lot of them have been here ... a long time, as early as '67. They're legal. They've settled down, they've got houses. They're raising families, four or five kids. Before [the] unionized commercial [work] ten years ago, we had members ... for them, the family thing ... had an impact on their jobs. And until now, they've been able to support their families ... there's more than two adults in the household, [and] there's not a person in the [union] who's not doing the same thing.



So they took care to organize and teach before they struck.

"We go to the jobs and explain what's bad from the past and what's better with a union," explains Nicholas Munoz, who had been a member of the UBC for eight years.

"We try to teach these guys that if they get a union, they get more respect. No rubber checks. If you work more than 40 hours a week, you get time and a half. The only way to do this is with a union.

"We have a lot of passion to do this movement, but we have also a lot of planning," says Munoz. "Then, we make a date—'Okay, June 1st.'"

On the first of June and the days following, the drywallers not only struck, they went to the job sites and militantly called off other workers.

As the strike quickly grew large and spread, UBC locals in San Diego, San Bernadino, and Los Angeles also allowed them to use their halls.

The excitement in the church, labor, and Latino communities was palpable. One of the first to speak out strongly was Msgr. Jaime Soto, the bishop's vicar to Latinos for Orange County's Catholic diocese.

In the Los Angeles Times, Soto noted that the very fact that the drywallers' strike had tied up the region's major industry "shows they are vital and contributing members of our community."

But by paying them poverty-level wages with no healthcare or other benefits, business was placing *its own* social costs on the backs of both the workers and the taxpayers.

"Who indeed is taking advantage of the system?" Soto asked.

In some circles, opposition to the strikers and their demands was hardening. Drywall contractors, who before the strike had said that if the workers organized they would sign, backed off.

The tune of the developers was also changing. Earlier, a spokesman for their Building Industry Assoc. had said the strike was "silly" and would be over in two weeks.

Now spokesmen were calling the strikers "a wild pack of dogs" and were trying to pin the strike with the label most calculated to cause fear and revulsion in California's Southland—"gang violence."

Still, Southern California developers attempted to pass off the trouble in the drywall industry as a "subcontractor problem."

And though the prices of the homes they build—now averaging $290,000 in Orange County—have risen by $10,000 a year in recent years, they have tried to pin the cause of low wages on the workers themselves.

In an Orange County press conference in early July, the president of the developers' association explained that the reason wages haven't risen in ten years is that the drywallers have become "less productive" than a few years ago.

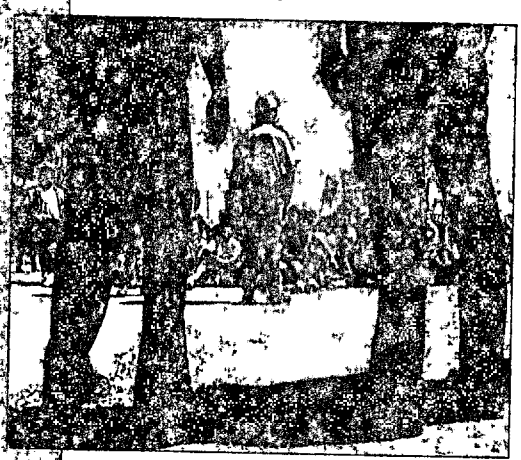
A developer himself, he also displayed rocks that he said had been thrown through the windshield of a drywall foreman's pickup. Then, startled by shouts of "Si Se Puede!" ("Yes, We Can Do It!") and finding picketing drywallers circling the building, he hastily concluded the press conference.

He may well have thought the drywallers were all in jail. The Orange County sheriff's department had surrounded and arrested 151 of them just before the Fourth of July weekend.

Though the deputies said they hadn't witnessed it, the strikers were supposed to have stormed a job and hustled some men off. The strikers say the men came with them voluntarily.

When the police arrived and began to make arrests, the drywallers said, "Nobody's done anything wrong. Why don't you arrest us all?" one of them remembers. And in a gesture of solidarity, "We all offered our hands for the handcuffs."

The sheriff's department arrested all 151 on suspicion of kidnapping, a felony. Bail was set at $10,000 to $50,000 apiece. Federal immigration agents were summoned and began demanding papers.



Striking drywallers have complained of police harassment.

Los Angeles Times Photo

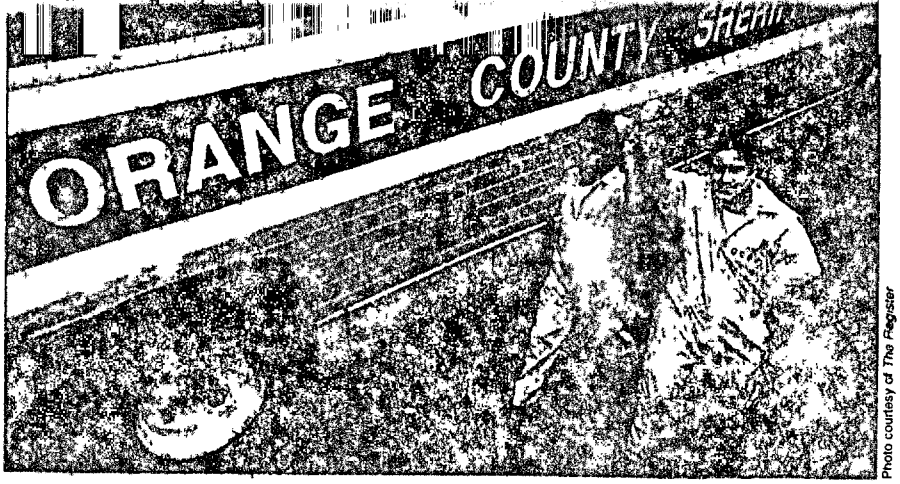


Photo courtesy of *The Register*

Arrests of drywallers brought shock, support in community.

But harassment has also grown. Orange County police are stopping strikers at will, arresting or ticketing them on petty charges. Los Angeles police have also conducted a mass arrest of strikers, beating some of them bloody. The Riverside and San Bernadino sheriffs have created special units for strike surveillance.

Now the developers' association is distributing spurious allegations by one of its security agencies that "organized crime" is behind the strike because it wants to create a union it can use to launder money.

Orange County sheriff Brad Gates has not held that office for 30 years without knowing which side his bread is buttered on. The list of the contributors to his campaigns is a who's who of Orange County developers.

But if Bates and his associates expected the mass arrests, high bail, and threats of deportation to break the strike—as some Orange County public-interest lawyers representing the strikers contended—it backfired.

The strikers' wives heard of the jailings on Spanish-language radio early in the morning, and they swung into action immediately.

That evening, television viewers all across Southern California were treated to the spectacle of women and children marching in front of the Santa Ana jail noisily demanding the men's release.

But striker unity held firm even in jail. When the district attorney's office offered some strikers a deal if they would leave the others to an uncertain fate, they refused.

Eventually, the major charges were dropped. Most of the strikers pled guilty to misdemeanor charges of trespassing and were released. A few pled guilty to assault or battery and got probation. Fewer than a third were in the country illegally.

Support for the strike has grown substantially since the arrests. Community groups have rallied to provide strikers and their families with moral and legal support. The AFL-CIO-supported California Immigrant Workers Association has set up a strike fund and called for contributions.

From individuals bringing a carload of oranges to a labor-community caravan delivering 15,000 pounds of rice and beans, food donations have poured into strike headquarters.

Huge, Profitable, and 'Open Shop'

Southern California's Billion-Dollar Developers Come From a Long Line of Union Busters

In little more than a century, Southern California has gone from an arid backwater whose major export was cowhides to one of the world's largest urban areas.

The succession of land developers who have done this have harnessed many of the West's politicians as well as much of its water to perform the task.

Militantly anti-union, they kept the region "open shop" from the Spanish-American War in 1898 to the Korean War.

Their attempt to institutionalize this with a "right-to-work" referendum in the 1950s failed when unions mobilized voters to reject it. Thereafter, even in conservative Orange County, the building trades were mostly union until the 1980s.

Then the big residential developers took their cue from Ronald Reagan's destruction of the air traffic controllers' union (PATCO) and went open shop with a vengeance.

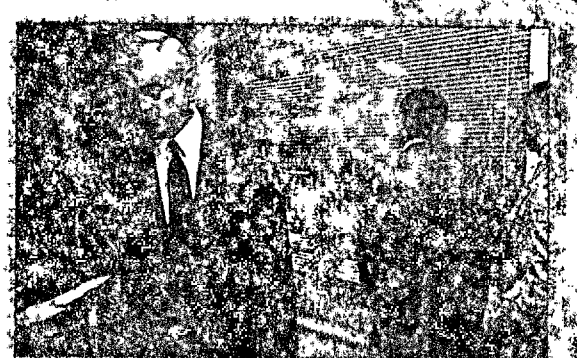
In a way, it was a payoff. They had helped put Reagan in office. As they had Nixon, so they would Bush.

Today, being open shop means that publicly they say they would be happy to hire union contractors, while privately they do what it takes to keep residential construction nonunion and labor cheap.

Partly because of that, they have become increasingly rich and powerful. Since the early '80s, Southern California land development "has been increasingly controlled by a handful of huge companies," reports urbanist Mike Davis in *City of Quartz*, his recent study of Los Angeles.

Development has also become extremely lucrative, he notes, "with annual profit margins as high as 50 percent."

Though among the most powerful forces in Southern California, developers have not been able to break the strike.



Doug Hecox
Spokesman, California
District Council

Patrick Nicholson
Construction Carpenter
Local 2361

Local 2361 Carpenters

Local 2361 Members

Local 2361 Carpenters

Local 2361 Members

Local 2361 Carpenters

Local 2361 Members

Above, Roy Navarro discusses strike tactics in the union hall. Left, Jesus Gomez called the first meeting after his check was shorted for three weeks running.

Indeed, dropping any pretense at neutrality, the association has hired one of the nation's premier union-busting law firms—Jackson, Lewis, Schnitzler & Krupman—to go after the strike and strikers.

"I'm sure they're going to hunt the strikers down and try to squelch the thing," commented Dave Sickler, the director of the AFL-CIO's Region Six, which covers much of the West. "They've spent 12 years trying to bust this group back to slave wages. We expect them to try every dirty trick in the book."

Attorneys for the AFL-CIO's California Immigrant Workers Association (CIWA)—set up specifically to organize nonunion immigrant workers—have been representing arrested strikers and trying to block builders' attempts to stymie the strike.

They've filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board charging seven major Southern California developers and contractors with denying the rights to picket and strike.

And CIWA attorneys have launched a suit against the contractors to recover some $45 million in illegally withheld overtime pay that they say is owed the drywall workers.

How will it end—and when?

"I've got to tell you, this is a must-win strike," says the AFL-CIO's Dave Sickler. "It represents the future and a remembrance of how we organized to begin with—by industry, not shop by shop.

"Now here's another set of people who want a union that bad again," adds Sickler. "As long as they see and feel the labor movement coming to their assistance, they'll prevail."

Maria Segura, wife of one of the strikers and a leader of the jail-side demonstration, agrees. "We're not going to give up—not as long as we have rice and beans and eggs and whatever else people donate."

Indeed, some drywall contractors have already settled and have men working.

One of them is J.C. Drywall, a major contractor in Northern California, where drywalling is still union. It is paying workers some $700 a week and adding health insurance, pensions, and vacation benefits.

Other drywall contractors say they would jump at the chance of signing—if developers would make it clear they would hire only those who paid union wages and benefits.

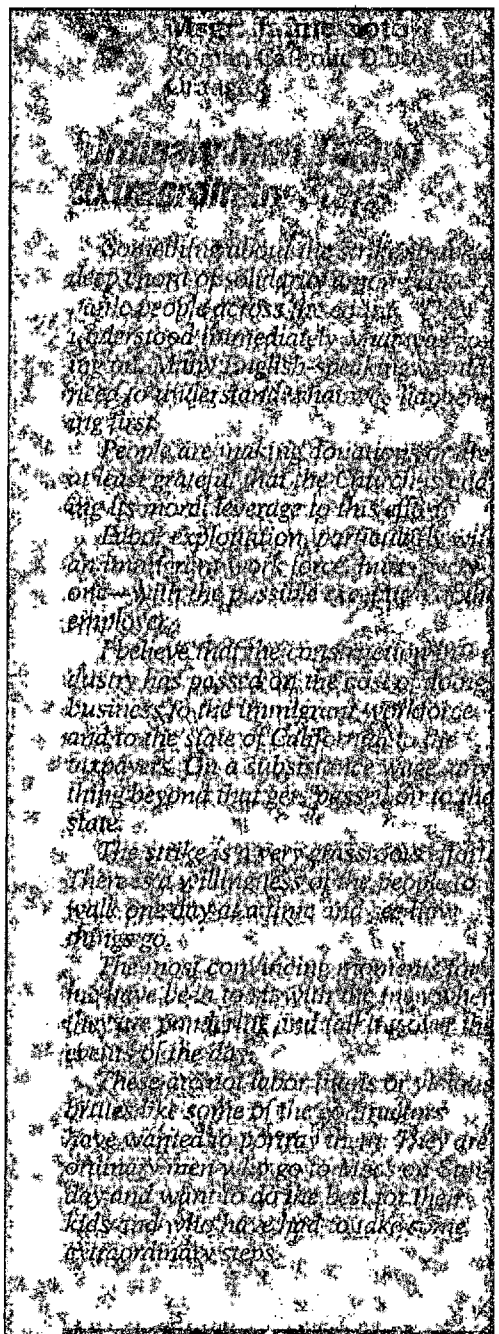
One such contractor worries about what will happen if the developers don't—not what will happen to the older drywallers, who have tasted the American Dream, even if they may be on the verge of losing it, but what will happen to their kids.

"Maybe we're seeing the next generation of rioters here. Like Edward J. Olmos said after the L.A. riots, when you've got a class that's got nothing to lose...."

In his clerical robes, Msgr. Soto has perhaps more faith.

"These are very ordinary men who are doing what they think they must do," he says. "At the heart of this has been an element of 'amazing grace.' Nobody thought it would happen or that it would last this long.

"And it has."



"It Will Help Us All"

Labor and Community Have Joined Hands to Support the Striking Drywallers—And This Is Just a Beginning

Friends say that Frank Garcia, a leading Orange County restaurateur, has a heart as big as he is. Local 2361 has helped Frank feed Thanksgiving dinner to as many as 5,000 needy people for the last five years.

So it was no surprise that, when Local 2361's Mike Ellis wanted help in finding donations of food for the striking drywallers using his union hall, he went to Frank.

What was a surprise was that Frank not only helped find the donations, he also set up a weekly Friday afternoon fundraising *fiesta* for the drywallers and their families.

Given in a venerable old ice-house converted to a community hall in old downtown Fullerton, the fiesta raises about $3,000 a week. "You can buy a lot of rice and beans for $3,000," says Frank with a wink.

Frank and others have helped mobilize the sizeable Orange County latino community and its organizations in support of the drywallers—Los Amigos, Hermandad, MALDEF, LULAC.

But they were not far ahead of organized labor in lending a hand. Unions as diverse as the Communications Workers (CWA), the Longshoremen (ILWU), the Electrical Workers (IUE), and the Hotel and Restaurant (HERE) have made financial donations. Other building trades unions have brought gifts of food.

HERE and the IUE joined Los Amigos, churches, and other organizations in an Orange County coalition that delivered more than 15,000 pounds of food to the strikers and their families.

"If we help them achieve a living wage in this industry, it will help us all," explained Angela Keefe, president of HERE Local 681. "The major land companies in Southern California are going into the hotel business now, and we'll be going up against them, too."

Restaurateur Frank Garcia organized fund raisers.

Besides supplying important legal aid, the AFL-CIO's California Immigrant Workers' Association has also set up a strike fund to help drywallers and their families pay basic bills—rent and utilities—until the strike has been won.

"This strike is just a beginning," says UBC general executive board member Armando Vergara, who, as state president of the Labor Committee for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), helped put CIWA together.

"Already the framers are saying 'Hey, what about us?' And there are a lot of other workers that see this and want to do the same thing. It's a model for other industries."

But as the strike continues, the drywallers and their families find themselves in increasingly difficult straits.

"It's hard on the kids," says Maria Segura, the wife of a striker, who has four children. "School is starting. What are we going to do for clothes for school?"

Without outside support, there will be no new clothes for school. And even if the strike is over soon, and the men go back to work at union wages, families will probably have trouble putting aside money for Christmas.

Here's what you UBC members and their locals and district councils can do to help:

Donations—Financial donations to the strikers and their families can be made to:

Drywallers Strike Fund
Los Angeles & Orange Co.
Organizing Committee
AFL-CIO Region VI
611 Shatto Place, Suite 400
Los Angeles, CA 90005

Telegrams—Letters and telegrams of support can be addressed to the strikers at:

United Workers for Fair Wages
c/o UBC Local 2361
1916 W. Chapman Ave.
Orange, CA 92668

Children's Gifts—Christmas gifts for the children may be mailed to:

United Workers for Fair Wages
c/o UBC Local 2361
1916 W. Chapman Ave.
Orange, CA 92668.

Labor and community supporters donated 15,000 pounds of food.

by Slobodan Dimitrov

Drywallers Sign Major Contractors, Get Incentive to Organize the Rest

In rapid-fire Spanish at packed meetings in the hall of Orange County's Local 2361, striking drywallers are talking excitedly about going back to work.

And even as Southern California's rainy season turns the dawns cold and damp, they are jumping into the beds of pick-up trucks for the long drive to picket duty with more enthusiasm than any time since the beginning of the strike.

They have good reason. A decade of wrestling sheetrock ten hours a day, six or seven days a week, while taking home as little as $250 or $300 for their labor, may soon be over.

After nearly six months of struggle and hardship, the 4,000 drywallers who organized and struck Southern California's residential housing industry have won an important victory.

In October, they brought the contractors that employ a majority of the drywallers to the negotiating table, including the two largest—Reliable and Gateway.

Now, with the Brotherhood's help, they have negotiated an agreement that includes a substantial a pay raise, a health plan, and an incentive to raise quality and ensure that the entire drywall industry pays the wage and benefit rates set forth in the contract.

"Their victory is in the best tradition of P.J. McGuire and the others who organized this continent's carpenters a century ago," said UBC President Sig Lucassen, hailing the victory.

"We knew they could do it. We knew nonunion carpenters could organize and be successful. Hopefully, their success will encourage nonunion carpenters to organize all across the U.S. and Canada," he said.

Lucassen hopes that such organizing will do more than reclaim the residential market—lost as a result of Reagan-era union busting in the early 1980s. He believes that the lessons of the drywallers' movement may also help shore up commercial markets that are less than 100 percent unionized.

Indeed, the nonunion drywallers will not be the only beneficiaries of their success.

"With residential housing organized, nonunion carpenters and contractors aren't going to be creeping into commercial," notes the UBC's 8th District board member, Armando Vergara.

"And as the wage gap closes, there will be a firmer floor for wage increases in commercial," Vergara says.

Both Vergara and the UBC's Doug McCarron, secretary of the Southern California District Council, were at the negotiating table at the invitation of the strikers.

Many strike leaders had been UBC members before home builders broke the union in the early 1980s. When they needed help in negotiations, they turned to the union.

Critical Issues: Organizing and Jobs

This issue of *The Carpenter* focuses on two critical issues—organizing and jobs.

First, if our union doesn't support nonunion workers trying to organize during these hard times, we will not be able to protect our jobs, wages, or benefits.

Second, if we don't get out and vote in our own self interest November 3, we will *still* face unemployment and lower pay.

As a carpenter, I know what it's like to sit on the bench when there's no work, worrying about your bills and where the next job's coming from. But unless the nonunion organize and join the labor movement, even more of us could be sitting on the bench. Permanently.

Now, just when people are telling us that workers won't stand up for themselves, some of the most poorly paid in our industry have drawn a line in the sand. They've organized *themselves*. They're standing firm. And it looks like they are going to win.

The 4,000 drywallers striking for a union and a contract in Southern California represent the growing unrest in construction.

Just as we union carpenters are fed up with falling rates and fewer hours, nonunion carpenters are also fed up. They're fed up with working from dawn to dusk for less than it takes to live and no benefits besides.

Like most nonunion construction workers, the drywall strikers are not fly-by-nights or illegal aliens, hiding from the law.

They've been building lives for themselves and their families here in the United States. Many of them have been members of the Brotherhood in the past. They've been living in California and working in construction for 15 or 20 years.

If they win, they will raise the wage and benefit standards in residential construction throughout Southern California. And that will strengthen our standards in commercial construction. We will all be better off.

These nonunion carpenters are knocking on the door. The labor movement has got to open that door and let them in—them, and others like them.

But that alone won't do the job. Without a change in the presidency of this country, union and nonunion carpenters alike will end up sitting on the bench.

"The hope for *revitalizing* the construction market rests with this election. The hope for *regaining our control* over that market rests with all carpenters being union."

The bottom line in this election is jobs, and George Bush has failed to deliver.

Under Bush, construction jobs are down 11.3 percent. Unemployment for construction workers is above 17 percent, and many of our locals are reporting rates as high as 60 percent.

Conversely, Democratic candidate Bill Clinton has outlined a four-year, $133 billion Rebuild America Fund to create jobs. Clinton's program would provide jobs for UBC members, rebuild our nation's decaying infrastructure, and give our economy a competitive edge.

George Bush has used his political clout to call for another capital gains tax cut for the rich. Bill Clinton has promised to use his to create jobs and rebuild America.

We need to elect Bill Clinton, elect a Democratic Congress to work with him, and hold them all to their promises.

Ultimately, the hope for *revitalizing* the construction market rests with this election. The hope for *regaining our control* over that market rests with all carpenters being union. Unless we take action now, I'm afraid the decade ahead will indeed be grim.

Sigurd Lucassen

SIGURD LUCASSEN
General President

"With residential housing organized, nonunion carpenters and contractors aren't going to creep into commercial."

Vergara and McCarron brought Brotherhood expertise to the negotiating table. The six drywaller negotiators brought the grit and determination of a strike that has stayed solid since June 1.

Together, they won an agreement that raises wage rates from the 4 cents a square foot that contractors were paying before the strike to 8 cents, including some money for benefits—what the drywallers demanded.

They also won a health plan—a major demand of the drywallers, who have been working without health insurance for some years and seen their families suffer as a consequence.

And they won the opportunity to raise their pay another 14 percent by raising quality and the number of contractors in the industry that will pay the wages and benefits set forth in the contract.

The contractors who have signed the contract employ more than half the drywallers in Southern California, more than that in some key areas. But there are still many to sign—and more work for union contractors to win.

In the event that the percentage of work paying the same wages and benefits set forth in the contract increases by 30 percent, the drywallers will receive a one-cent per square foot pay raise.

The contractors were amenable to this market stabilization incentive, says the district council's McCarron, because the more work done at the union contract rates the more competitive they will be.

"A lot of these contractors were union at one time," he says. "They remember the level playing field. They understand that they need a stable labor market." That way, McCarron explains, contractors would no longer have to compete by driving the cost of labor down, dragging productivity and quality after it.

Local 2361 business agent Mike Olds agrees. "With a level playing field, the best contractor wins," he says. Without apprenticeship training, contractors were loading jobs up with bodies to get the production. Union quality will give *them* some pride back, as well as the workers.

Photo by Slobodan Dimitrov

UBC's McCarron, Vergara helped negotiate.

Still, it took nearly six months and a hard fight to bring the contractors to the table.

Hindrance from Southern California's megabuck developers was part of the reason they had to stay out so long. Prime movers behind the anti-union drive of the early '80s, the developers have been the major beneficiaries of the low labor costs since then. During the strike they offered to pay the contractors' security costs and hired a notorious union-busting law firm.

But eventually, the strike simply wore the drywall contractors down. "They had a hard time getting people to fill their jobs, and those they were getting weren't capable," says Olds. That and the law suits wore them down, he says.

Photo by Slobodan Dimitrov

Strikers wore down resistance with their discipline and organization.

The lawsuits charged an increasing number of drywall contractors with violations of federal labor law by not paying overtime.

Despite working drywallers for 60 hours a week or more, contractors think that, because they pay piecework, they don't have to pay overtime, Robert Cantore, one of the drywallers' lawyers, told the "Orange County Register."

"We'll teach them that they're wrong," he said.

By the end of September, the drywallers had filed overtime suits against 34 contractors. Many of these have since signed the new agreement.

Photo by Slobodan Dimitrov

Drywallers will continue to strike contractors who have not yet signed.

Some contractors have already fired their scabs and turned to the union for help in manning their jobs. But as drywallers go back to work—this time under contract—the struggle continues.

"This is not the end," says Jesus Gomez, an Orange County drywaller who is a key strike leader. "We're going to keep going until we get a hundred percent of the contractors under contract."

"We want to make sure this works, not just for the length of the contract, but for good," says another strike leader, San Diego drywaller Tony Hernandez. "We're going to keep the area committees going until we get every one of the areas fully organized."

Even with an agreement signed, strike leaders expect picketline activity to remain high and nonunion contractors and police to remain tough.

In mid September, 75 Palmdale police in riot gear arrested 17 strikers who were trying to call workers off job sites there, charging them with felony conspiracy and turning some over to the immigration service. But with the sheriff's helicopter squalling overhead, the strikers continued to chant "We Want Union."

"The sheriff's deputies just went wild on them," Jose DePaz, executive director of the AFL-CIO's California Immigrant Workers Association (CIWA), told the press. "There's a widespread feeling in this industry that if they're Latino workers, you can take advantage of them."

Formed some years ago with Brotherhood support, CIWA has supported the drywallers since early in the strike. "It has been decades since we have seen anything like the militant determination of these strikers to get a union, says Dave Sickler, AFL-CIO regional director.

Even the police have a grudging respect for the drywallers' determination. "There's no end to this," the Chula Vista Police Department's labor-relations officer told the Chula Vista newspaper. "They've got a mission to do, and they intend to do it."

Meanwhile, drywall strikers and their families are preparing to celebrate their achievement and return to a somewhat more normal life, even if that means a less than normal Christmas for their children.

"We're going to start eating the way we used to eat ten years ago," says Hernandez.

Christmas gifts for the drywallers' children can be mailed to:
United Workers for Fair Wages,
c/o UBC Local 2361,
1916 W. Chapman Ave.,
Orange, CA 92668.

'End of Reagan-Bush Era'

'We can pick our own turning point. And this is the turning point we're picking.'

Mike Potts is executive secretary of the Orange County Building Trades Council. The Carpenter interviewed him on the importance of the drywallers' strike while in California.

My faith in organizing has been restored by the fervor I've seen among the drywall strikers.

At the start, I was the least supportive guy for bottom-up organizing. Just get me to the big boys and let me do the talking, that was my attitude. But it was wrong, dead wrong. You couldn't do it without this pressure.

The developers began stealing the drywallers' wages when they busted the unions in 1982. Reagan broke PATCO, and the Business Roundtable sent the signal down. Now's the time.

Ever since then here in Southern California we've been up against some of the very players who engineered the election of Reagan in 1980—the wealthy, landed interests.

Their success in busting the unions in residential has been a threat to the rest of the building trades, too. It's had a deadening effect on *all* wage increases.

Reagan kicked us in the butt with PATCO. He backed us up against the wall, and we should have fought back with everything we had. He put razor blades to our wrists, and the blood has been dripping until now.

Now, I think we're seeing the end of the Reagan-Bush era. With the strike and the election, we're showing we can pick our own turning point. And this is the turning point we're picking.

I don't see any labor activity more important than this strike in the country right now. And the support that the United Brotherhood has been giving is wonderful—opening union halls to the strikers, helping them raise money, helping them negotiate a contract.

This is the right time to turn public sentiment around, because everybody feels the squeeze. People aren't specifically pro-striker, they're pro-family. They have a sympathy for people who are demanding health care for their children.

They know that the rich got away with avoiding responsibilities like pensions and health care for the last twelve years. And that the rest of us are paying the price through our taxes.

The Carpenters used to say, "organize or die." Today, that's the only way to win back the strength of the labor movement—organize, organize everybody. If you've got to scab, don't just scab, organize everybody on the job.

The drywallers' success is not a panacea. There won't be a magical rebirth of unions in the home-building industry overnight.

But turning the corner is an important first step. It puts the contractors and developers on notice—if they don't want us to share the prosperity, then they're going to share the pain.

Solidarity—Again

By Supporting the Drywallers, 'Justice for Janitors' Repaid an Old Debt

Office cleaners want justice—and a union.

Besides the farm workers' struggle in the 1960s, strike leader Jesús Gómez compares the drywallers' movement to the successful campaign of low-wage cleaning crews in Southern California—"Justice for Janitors."

For four years, he and other drywallers watched the building cleaners on the nightly news, striking, demonstrating, even being attacked by police. They knew that, ultimately, the cleaning crews had been successful in getting a contract and a union.

When the drywallers went on strike, "Justice for Janitors" they arrive where we are," says Gómez. Joining the drywallers at meetings and demonstrations, they brought food, money, and—most important—solidarity.

In fact, when the Service Employees' "Justice for Janitors" campaign arrived to support the drywallers, they were repaying an old debt. More than 70 years earlier, the Brotherhood had helped the *janitors* organize.

Tired of seeing real estate owners rehab their buildings with nonunion janitors, they had encouraged the chartering of the Building Service Employees Union. Once organized, the janitors were able to refuse carpenter work.

Today, the Service Employees are more than a million strong. And organized janitors have long since helped organize workers in hospitals and nursing homes and the state and local governments where the majority of the SEIU's members now lie.

But just as the Brotherhood lost control of residential construction, so the SEIU lost traditional janitorial markets, then suffered devastating anti-union attacks in the 1980s.

They responded with a grass-roots organizing campaign—Justice for Janitors. It combines the expertise of the union with the ability of cleaning crews to best organize themselves.

As in construction, the building-maintenance contractors had broken the union by "double-breasting." They ran both union and nonunion operations simultaneously, reducing their union workers to a handful and driving down wages.

During the commercial building boom of the 1980s in Los Angeles, the numbers in union cleaning crews actually dropped from 5,000 to 1,500, as the contractors rapidly replaced them with nonunion crews. Most of them were immigrant workers, working without benefits, often off the clock, under horrifying conditions.

During this time, small "mom and pop" cleaning contractors were often overwhelmed by big international contractors, mostly European. And the major building owners, the behind-the-scene players, also became corporate giants from New York, Toronto, London, or Tokyo.

Despite this concentration of power, the Service Employees have been able wholly turn things around in Los Angeles.

They've done so by combining the global reach of their own international union with the strength on the street and in the community of thousands of exploited janitors.

As contracts have been won with major downtown contractors, the number of union janitors has grown "beyond all expectations" to nearly 7,000.

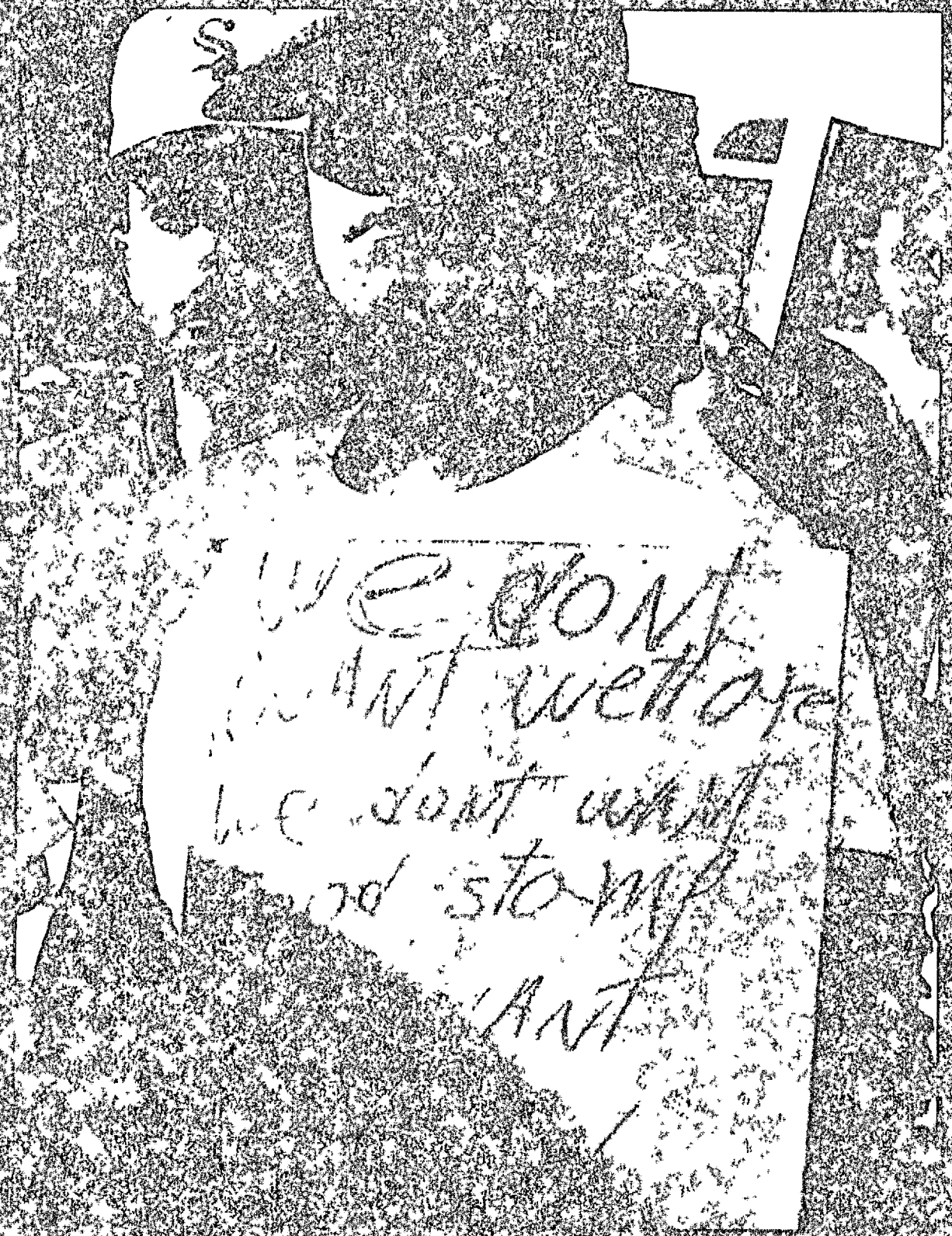
Besides creating a "level playing field" for cleaning contractors, that has vastly increased the number of rank-and-file organizers in the "Justice for Janitors" campaign.

Now, as the successful drywaller strikers fan out to organize the far reaches of the Los Angeles area—Fontana, Santa Clarita, Antelope Valley—the cleaning crews have begun organizing Wilshire, Westwood, Beverly Hills.

Solidarity is not a one-way street. Even while they were striking, drywallers have joined the demonstrations and picket lines of "Justice for Janitors," shouting the slogan common to both of them: "Sí se puede" ("We can do it!"). They're right, of course. Together, we can win.

September/October 1992

United Brotherhood of Carpenters & Joiners of America — Founded 1881



L.A. Drywallers Say: We Can Do It!

Mass arrest of strikers largest in OC history

Attorneys debate basis of felony kidnapping charges

■ **SWAMPED:** Jail forced to release some inmates early/**24**

■ **AT A GLANCE:** A look at the issues in drywall strike/**24**

By Gregg Zoroya
The Orange County Register

The Orange County sheriff's decision to jail 149 labor protesters on suspicion of conspiracy to commit kidnapping is the largest mass felony arrest in county history, a high-ranking prosecutor said Friday.

The protesters, an organized segment of an estimated 4,000 drywall workers on strike throughout Southern California, were arrested in Mission Viejo on Thursday after allegedly rushing through a construction site and abducting six strike-breakers.

"There's no way they're going to charge 149 people with conspiracy to kidnap," said Orange County Public Defender Ron Butler. "I mean, that would be ridiculous on the part of the DA."

The sudden surge of bookings at the overcrowded Orange County Jail forced deputies there to set up 100 emergency beds and take extraordinary steps to release dozens of prisoners early.

Assistant District Attorney Wally Wade, who described the felony arrests as the largest ever, said he hopes to have prosecutors review the case as early as Sunday afternoon. Protesters in custody must be arraigned no later than Tuesday.

Whether felony charges are warranted in this unusual case, Wade said, is "a big if."

"As a practical matter, it would be pretty difficult to prosecute 150 people at once," he said.

Butler speculated that the felony arrests and high bail — $50,000 for each striker — were imposed in order to keep the demonstrators off the street and diffuse any potential for more strike-related violence.

But court officials who reviewed sheriff's reports Friday said they found reasonable cause to hold all 149 demonstrators on the felony conspiracy charge.

Judicial hearing officer Robert Upson said he pored over police reports for seven hours Friday and discovered, among other things, that some of the arrested drywall workers had allegedly confessed to wrongdoing.

"They have openly admitted that this indeed was their aim ... to disrupt the construction process and to solicit and gain the support of the workers there, even if they had to drag them off the job," Upson said.

Upson and Judicial Hearing Officer Vince Furriel had the task of determining, within 36 hours of the mass arrests, whether there was sufficient grounds to hold all 149 strikers over the holiday weekend.

Both men sought legal assistance on the conspiracy issue Thursday from two Municipal Court judges, James M. Brooks and Richard Stanford Jr. The hearing officers found that a "probable cause" to hold the protesters in jail existed based on a particular legal theory. Under that theory, strikers who participate in a demonstration resulting in kidnappings are liable for conspiracy to kidnap even if they did not actually take part in the abductions.

Please see **ARRESTS** /24

ARRESTS: Jailing of 149 strikers largest in OC history

FROM 1

Drywall strike at a glance

An estimated 4,000 drywall hangers are on strike in Southern California. The strike began June 1 and has hit the home-building industry hard. Here are some issues involved in it:

Money: Drywall hangers are paid by the square foot. The current rate is about 4 to 6 cents, down from 7 to 8 cents a few years ago. Strikers said experienced workers earn about $300 in a 60-hour week. Industry officials present a rosier picture, saying skilled workers can earn $12 an hour and up. Strikers want the piece rate increased to 8 to 9 cents.

Benefits: Drywallers receive no benefits. Strikers want company-paid health insurance and vacations.

Union recognition: The strikers want union recognition. Loosely organized now, they meet at a Carpenters Union hall and probably would seek affiliation with the carpenters if recognized. Unions lost power in the home-building industry more than a decade ago, and many contractors say a resurgence of union activity could devastate the industry.

The strikers: Most are Mexican immigrants. As many as half come from a single village, El Maguey in Guanajuato state in central Mexico, northwest of Mexico City.

The trade: Drywall hangers take 4-by-12-foot sheets of sheetrock, cut them to fit around plumbing, plugs and switches, and nail them into place on interior walls. Drywall tapers putty and sand the nailed sheets, repeating the process three times to achieve a smooth surface.

The industry: The once high-flying construction industry has fallen on hard times. Since office and home construction peaked in 1990, Orange County has lost an estimated 15,000 construction jobs. Dozens of companies have failed, and even the giant Irvine Co. has slashed its staff. Rumors of impending failures have become an industry staple.

— Ronald Campbell/The Register

Upson conceded that this was "a very unusual case."

Jesus Gomez, a drywall worker who was one of the strike organizers, said Friday that the kidnapping allegations are trumped up charges.

"The police are giving us a hard time," Gomez said. "They arrested (the workers) on the street, and there's nothing illegal with men on the streets."

The violence at the Mission Viejo construction site Thursday was the most serious since thousands of drywall workers walked off development projects June 1, further crippling an already suffering building industry.

The workers, whose livelihood is installing plaster-filled board over newly framed buildings, are demanding pay increases and the chance to form and be recognized as a labor union.

Sheriff's officials declined to discuss their decision to hold all 149 workers on trespassing and conspiracy to commit kidnapping charges.

A news release stated that the federal Immigration and Naturalization Service had placed holds on 88 of the arrestees, which means that those men face deportation once their Orange County cases are completed.

Twenty-three of those arrested are from outside Orange County.

Investigators allege that the demonstrators broke down a fence Thursday and kidnapped the six workers from the Pacific Hills housing development off La Paz Road in Mission Viejo.

The strikers left in a caravan of vehicles and were stopped some distance away from sheriff's deputies trailing them. The six victims, who have not been identified, were released unharmed.

Strikers were led to jail, defiantly raising their handcuffed wrists for television cameras.

Wives, children and girlfriends of demonstrators filled the Intake/Release Center at the Orange County Jail in Santa Ana on Friday, demanding visits.

With her two children in tow, Flor Espinosa of Los Angeles got in to see her husband, Felipe, 40. She said he and other arrestees with him appeared to be in good spirits.

"He believes in what he's doing, and we're supporting him all the way," Espinosa said, but she admitted she was shaken by the felony allegations.

Maria Reyes, 23, of Buena Park, who gave birth to her son just three weeks ago, said she is less worried about the felony charges than the $50,000 bail to win the release of her husband, Raul Reyes Sr.

"I can't even come up with the rent for this month or for food for my baby," she said.

Drywall arrests plus holiday bring some early jail releases

By Gregg Zoroya
The Orange County Register

When 149 drywall workers arrested on felonies suddenly showed up at the Orange County Jail on Thursday, deputies were sent scrambling to find room.

"We don't really need to crowd up early on a three-day weekend," Assistant Sheriff Jerry Krans said.

The demonstrators had been arrested on suspicion of felony conspiracy to commit kidnapping. Bail was $50,000 each and none was being released. To make room, dozens of other prisoners were sent home early and 100 beds were crammed into an already overfilled branch jail in Orange.

The county's five jails are designed to hold 3,200 people, but regularly are filled with 4,800.

The jail in Orange, a medium-security lockup called the Theo Lacy Facility, witnessed an immediate population increase from 1,018 to 1,118, Krans said.

To make room, the jailers reworked a complicated formula for determining which prisoners — most serving time for crimes such as burglary, narcotics violations, petty theft and grand theft — could be released early.

Normally, prisoners win a third off of jail sentences for good behavior. Under the formula used by the Sheriff's Department, most also receive an additional 10 percent reduction because of overcrowding.

Thursday, for the first time in jail history, jailers began knocking off 20 percent from the sentences to release a new batch of prisoners, Krans said. And an emergency list of inmates who would receive 30 percent off of their sentences for an early release was prepared in case overcrowding during the holiday weekend grows even worse, Krans said.

ORANGE COUNTY

Strike threatens homebuilding

By Andre Mouchard
The Orange County Register

ORANGE — A week-old labor dispute involving as many as half of the drywall hangers in Southern California is threatening to slow or stop local homebuilding operations.

Since June 1, about 2,000 nonunion construction workers specializing in the hanging and finishing of drywall agreed not to work.

Although it is unclear how many, if any, local homebuilding sites have been affected by the strike, pickets have formed at some projects in Orange, San Diego and Riverside counties.

Local subcontractors said Monday that drywall hangers willing to work have been threatened with violence by strikers — a contention strike leaders denied.

"The only way to get guys on the job site right now is to bus in there with more (willing) workers than there are strikers," said Fred Erdstieck, owner of Dutchman Drywall in Orange.

"I had 70 picketers out in front of my Anaheim (work) yard this morning."

> "The homebuilders have been teaching us how to live without eating for the past two years. We think we can live with a strike for the next two months or so."
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> spokesman for striking drywall hangers

which has taken an estimated 15,000 construction jobs from Orange County since the building peak in late 1990 — will make it tough for the strikers to get what they want.

"Everyone seems to think contractors and builders are in fat city," Erdtsieck said. "But the reality is that most contractors are losing money right now."

Mike Olds, an official with Carpenter's Union Local 2361 in Orange, said the strikers are supported — but not officially sponsored — by the union.

"We've let them use our hall for meetings in the past few months, but that's our only involvement," Olds said.

"However, we do agree with the basic argument. What they want guarantees fair wages and benefits. What's been happening has been exploitation in its greatest form."

Local homebuilders said they will rely on subcontractors to resolve the dispute — at least until building is affected.

"If it gets to that point, we might consider some legal action (against subcontractors)," said Rick Sherman, a spokesman for William Lyon Co. in Newport Beach. "But we're hopeful it won't come to that."

Key issues for strikers are wages and benefits. Drywall hangers and finishers typically are paid on a piecework basis, with no benefits offered. Wages start at about 5 cents a foot, or roughly $12 to $15 an hour.

Leaders of the contingent said wages have not increased since the mid-1980s, and have actually decreased during the building slowdown of the past two years. They also said extra pay for time-consuming and dangerous work has been eliminated, further driving down wages.

Strikers said they won't return to work until contracts are signed with most construction-subcontracting companies, with wages set at about 8 cents per square foot and some benefits, such as health care, provided as a term of employment.

"The homebuilders have been teaching us how to live without eating for the past two years," said Roy Navarro, a drywall hanger and spokesman for the strikers. "We think we can live with a strike for the next two months or so."

If the strike lasts half that long, it could stop construction at many homebuilding projects in Orange County, subcontractors said.

Drywall hanging and finishing typically is completed when a house is about three-fourths finished.

6-12-92

Drywall companies eye pay increase proposal

By DIANE LINDQUIST
Staff Writer

Drywall companies that have been the recent target of employee protests and walkouts plan to offer workers a package of pay increases and other proposals Monday in an effort to get them back to work on local home construction projects.

"I think it's a fair proposal in relation to everything they came at us with," said Hal Moore, chief executive of Great Western Drywall, where officials of 25 drywall subcontracting companies met yesterday morning to shape their offer.

He declined to reveal details of the plan until after it has been presented to worker representatives. However, he said, it includes a stairstep-system of wage increases and limits the role of labor brokers, who supply a large portion of the workers to the drywall companies.

Moore claimed the labor brokers often skim money from workers' wages. The practice, he said, is the basis for employee complaints that Hispanics, who comprise as much as 90 percent of the county's drywall hangers, are earning less than Anglos.

"We're expecting the work-

See Drywall on Page E-2

Drywall

Companies prepare pay boost package

Continued from E-1

ers to cooperate in getting rid of the labor barons so that they get a good wage," he said.

The companies, which are in the process of forming a drywall association, also plan to propose a special committee to deal with complaints and problems.

"It would be made up of 50 percent managers or company representatives and 50 percent workers. They will address any or all problems on a weekly or monthly basis," Moore said.

Representatives of the drywall employees could not be reached yesterday for response to the management plan.

They have been loosely organized by Tony Hernandez, who arranged a work stoppage and a rally Wednesday at the County Administration Building that drew 500 to 1,000 chanting protesters.

Yesterday morning, they outlined their complaints at a meeting attended by representatives of the county's Chief Administrative Office and the Department of Transborder Affairs, the General Association of Contractors and Assemblyman Steve Peace.

The labor brokers also were a topic at that meeting, said Myrna Zambarno, an aide to the South Bay assemblyman. Workers complained that the agents were pocketing part of their paychecks, she said.

Another complaint concerned cuts in wages over recent years.

"There is no question the labor rate has been cut substantially over the past few years," Moore admitted.

He said building companies that secure contracts on projects put undue pressure on subcontractors, such as the drywall companies, to keep costs low.

"This thing has gotten out of hand," he said. "Rates have come down too low to the point where the workers are not making a fair enough wage."

ORANGE COUNTY

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Drywall hanging and finishing typically is completed when a house is about three-fourths finished.

defendants, Hoechst Celanese Corp., which produces the resin for the pipe fittings, agreed to settle with the Bay Summit plaintiffs for an amount that averages about $40,000 a house. That settlement reportedly came while the jury was still deliberating.

U.S. Brass, which made the fittings out of the resin supplied by Hoechst Celanese, also was hit with $63,000 in punitive damages.

Selden estimated it costs between $5,000 and $7,000 to replumb a house, not counting the cost of temporary relocation and inconvenience.

The trial that starts today (known as the Gawara case) has the same three corporate defendants and 41 homeowner plaintiffs who have reportedly experienced a total of about 70 leaks in their homes. These homes are in the Briarwood Point development near Imperial Beach in the South Bay.

Attorney Terry Ross, an attorney

wood in El Cajon were paid a $3.4 million settlement by U.S. Brass in the late 1980s.

With the amount of homes that may be affected, there are expected to be many more polybutylene pipe and pipe fitting cases going through the courts that will likely keep plaintiffs' and defendants' attorneys busy for years to come.

"The list is endless," Ring said.

Drywall Accord Reached — But Not Yet In San Diego

LOS ANGELES (AP) — AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland applauded an agreement to end a walkout by drywallers who staged a rolling job protest across Southern California to demand higher wages plus benefits, but the accord has apparently yet to have an impact in San Diego County.

"We take great pride in welcoming this new group of independent drywallers into the American family," Kirkland said in a statement issued late Tuesday from the AFL-CIO's Washington, D.C., headquarters.

"This largely Latino work force won fair wages, benefits and a union," Kirkland said.

Some 39 members of the Pacific Rim Contractors Association voted to endorse the pact with the Southern California Conference of Carpenters union, said Eric Sisco, an attorney for the association.

Robert Cantore, an attorney for the California Immigrant Workers Association, said the union would give jobs, most of them temporary, to drywallers starting this week.

Those who don't get work will remain on strike duty, affecting contractors who haven't endorsed the agreement, he said. Drywall contractors in San Diego County may be a long way from signing on to the accord, however.

In San Diego County, there has been picketing and reports of violence from the North County to the South Bay. As recently as yesterday, police were reportedly called to McMillin Communities' Zamora development off East H Street in Chula Vista. According to reports, tensions developed when about 150 drywall workers picketed the job site.

The pact, which is subject to

Please turn to Page 3B

Roles Of Agents

ects have plagued both homebuyers gents for decades. Mandatory dis- uyers will have a better notion of expect when they go into a deal. er disclosure also helps shield the essional" in the transaction — from shly, stand before a judge someday r asked if the roof leaked."

sclosures generally are considered ther disclosures that draw far less istance, more states are requiring ice up front who they work for in a

ment ("agency") relationships con- g cited in court cases by lawyers who t — the innocent homebuyer — did- hat the nice professional real estate is working for the seller.

l deals, the agent chauffeuring you ually works for the seller — meaning tled to know everything "your" agent , including information you've confid- you'd be willing to spend on a house.)

uebuyers are screaming foul, more required to identify their employers low and when that disclosure should r, is proving to be a stumbling block.

on't require disclosure until the deal is . Just before you sign on the dotted will mention, "Oh, by the way, I've the seller all this time."

require disclosure before a buyer even t house. Some agents argue that dis- causes all sorts of hassles, not the s bringing an air of suspicion to the

Please turn to Page 2B

cations in acknowledgement of their certification," she added.

"The letters IBD after my name send a signal to my clients that I am capable of providing interior construction drawings that can be permitted by the city," said Norma

Drywallers—

Continued from Page 1B

dismissal of strike-related litigation, is supposed to end the walkout that began June 1 and involved as many as 2,000 drywallers. The litigation includes lawsuits against contractors alleging labor law violations and suits against strikers concerning pickets and strike-related violence.

The accord, if approved, provides a wage increase and medical and other benefits for the drywallers, who are now eligible for union membership.

Drywallers were making 10 cents per square foot 10 years ago but only up to 5½ cents before they went on strike. The new contract raises base pay to 7¼ cents per square foot, with higher rates for special projects, Sisco said.

In San Diego County, the Associated Builders & Contractors and drywall contractors have agreed to create a health benefits program for the workers. The monies for the plan have begun to be collected and the program is scheduled to be implemented Jan. 1.

"We're all working to get it done as expeditiously as possible," Sisco said.

Strikers had walked off the job in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura counties.

Accords have apparently been reached between most contractors and drywallers in Riverside and Los Angeles counties, but given that San Diego has become a largely non-union town, negotiations may be much more difficult here.

Some drywall contractors, such as Joe Sayatovich of Sayatovich Drywall Interiors, for example, have vowed not to negotiate at all.

—With Thor Kamban Biberman

Conference on Interior Design; and Norma Clark, former

Applicants for the new certification process must have a eight years of diverse professional experience and interior tion and pass the 1990 Building and Barrier-free Code sec tional Council for Interior Design Qualifications examinatio

Applications for certification are made to the CCIDC. tification provided is not state-controlled; it is recognize under sections of the Business and Professions Code.

Speakers at this evening's meeting are to discuss the movement for certification, the benefits of certification and following certification.

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Demonstrators protest arrests of 149 drywallers

Associated Press 7-3-92 Fresno Bee

MISSION VIEJO — About 75 people picketed and chanted "We want justice" outside the Orange County Jail to protest the arrests of 149 striking drywallers accused of trespassing and conspiracy.

"We don't want no more Medi-Cal," said Rafaela Segura, 22, of Fullerton, whose husband, Gustavo, was being booked after the strikers were arrested Thursday.

"We want better insurance ... benefits."

Despite the protesters' presence, officials said the strikers would remain in jail during the July Fourth holiday weekend.

"They're not going to be cited and released" as originally planned, said Lt. Dick Olson. "They will have to remain in custody until they appear in court Monday morning."

Municipal and Superior courts will be closed Friday in observance of Independence Day.

Sheriff's deputies pulled over the strikers early Thursday morning after they left a Mission Viejo construction site.

The strike is in its fifth week.

7-3-92

ices

JAMES SKOVMAND

Crime Watch

18 drywall hangers suspects in thefts

SAN DIEGO — Eighteen men identified by police as striking drywall workers were arrested yesterday for allegedly stealing equipment and vandalizing construction sites in north San Diego.

The men, riding in pickup trucks, went to three locations before they were stopped by police, said San Diego police spokesman Bill Robinson.

The suspects first stopped at a construction site on Scripps Vista Way in Scripps Ranch about 1:30 p.m. yesterday, then went on to another site north of there on Springhurst Drive, near Poway Road, Robinson said. They were arrested at a condominium construction site at 11900 Black Mountain Road in Rancho Peñasquitos. Robinson said the men were in possession of property taken from each of the three sites, including expensive power tools and power cables.

Non-union drywall hangers are on strike for higher wages and for health benefits.

BUSINESS

SUNDAY
JULY 5, 1992
ORANGE COUNT
Los Angeles Time

Hanging Tough

Roots Unite Striking Drywallers

By MICHAEL FLAGG
TIMES STAFF WRITER

ANAHEIM

Four hundred years ago, buccaneers roamed the Spanish Main, plundering galleons heavy with silver spewed out by the mines of Mexico's Guanajuato state. But now Guanajuato exports something entirely different. Men.

Over the past three decades, hundreds of men from one small village, El Maguey, have taken the 1,300-mile road north from central Mexico. Nearly all of them have gone into the same line of work: nailing up drywall for Southern California's housing industry.

Many of them are related. That blood link is a major reason why most of the drywall installers in Orange and San Diego counties have banded together to walk off the job, crippling the building industry. And those few hundred men are the core of the thousand drywall hangers who went on strike five weeks ago.

They are also among the 149 men who were arrested by sheriff's deputies Thursday and charged with kidnaping six strikebreakers from a construction site in Mission Viejo.

The men of El Maguey have organized this protest. They don't have a union; getting one is among their demands. A union would ensure that wages don't slip any further. Right now, they make about $300 a week; 10 years ago, when the business was unionized, drywall workers made twice that and more.

Most of the men are still Mexican citizens. But the struggle for a union shows that the men of El Maguey have learned the ways of the United States, just as earlier waves of Irish, Italian and German immigrants beat the system that exploited them by joining trade unions, running for public office, getting an education.

"When the first generation no longer fantasizes about going back to Mexico, that's the dividing line," said Marcelo Suarez Orozco, an anthropologist at UC San Diego who has studied emigration from Mexico.

"After a while, these men begin to compare themselves to American workers; they begin to think of themselves as 'hyphenated' Americans—as Mexican-Americans."

Most of the Mexican workers in the United States come from one of three states in central Mexico: Jalisco, Michoacan and Guanajuato.

El Maguey is a village of several thousand people, nestled in one of the many valleys of Guanajuato, a state of mile-high mountainsides and deep ravines north and west of Mexico City. El Maguey is named for a plant with long spiky leaves that grows around the town, a plant from which tequila is made.

There isn't much work in Mexico's rural villages. So it begins this way: One young man goes north, finds work, sends some money home, and soon more men join him. When they have a little money, they come back to the village to find a wife and take her north. So strong is the lure of the north that villages such as El Maguey are virtually devoid of young men.

In 1963, Juan Valadez came from El Maguey to Orange County and found work hanging drywall. Home builders were knocking houses together as fast as they could in the sunny days when California exploded with growth.

"After a while, his three brothers joined him. The business, back then, was unionized, and the money was good, sometimes $350 a week if you worked from dawn to dusk. That was as much as $18,000 a year when a little ranch house cost $24,000 and a new Chevy Impala with all the options would set you back $3,500. It was enough to let you live a middle-class life and, as Valadez did, even put a couple of kids through Stanford University.

A lot of the money went back to El Maguey. Suddenly, there were new houses all over the village and people wearing American clothes.

Hanging drywall, though, is among the hardest, hottest jobs in construction. Drywall, or plasterboard, makes up the interior walls of a house; it usually comes in half-inch-thick slabs of paper and plaster 4 feet tall by 12 feet long and weighing more than a hundred pounds each.

Drywall hangers wrestle the slabs into position and nail them onto the house's wooden frame. The sheets are later taped, plastered and painted.

Hangers are paid a piece rate, that is, a man's wages depend on how many square feet of drywall he can hang. A skilled worker could race through a house back then, nailing up drywall as he went. It was easier and simpler because most houses were square, blocky affairs the old-timers called "dingbats," with none of the features common today: cathedral ceilings, say, or tricky arches, what's called a "cut-up" house.

DRYWALLERS: Ethnic Roots Give Strikers an Uncommon Bond

Wages were high because the drywall companies all had unions, and with the housing market booming, the demand for skilled labor was brisk.

In the early 1980s, though, during the last recession, that began to change. Hard times meant that the home builders and their drywall subcontractors suddenly had a reason to bust the carpenters' unions, which represented the drywall hangers.

A flood of cheap labor from Mexico assured the drywall companies that they would have plenty of people hungry enough to replace the union workers. In just a few years, the residential drywall business had no unions at all.

Wages began to drop; the Anglo workers, who had once dominated the industry when it was unionized, left in droves and subcontractors replaced them with more men from El Maguey and elsewhere in Mexico who were more than willing to work for less. When drywall workers were in the union, one in four had been Mexican; afterward it was nine of 10.

Roy Navarro is typical of the men who came after 1982. Now 31, he was washing dishes and cooking in Chicago a decade ago, just as his father had done. (In fact, he is named for singing cowboy Roy Rogers, star of his father's favorite TV show in the 1950s.)

When Navarro came to Orange County to work drywall in the early 1980s, he made enough to support his family in Fullerton and send money to his widowed mother and three sisters in El Maguey.

Navarro and the other men—few of them high school graduates, some of them illiterate—also managed to make enough money to donate to the construction of a grand new church in the village. But as wages have dropped in the last few years, a lot less money has been going back to Mexico.

It's a hot, muggy weekday, and Navarro—one of the leaders of the current walkout—is parked in an Anaheim Hills shopping center scouting one of Southern California's hundreds of construction sites for signs of drywall being hung inside. If he sees anybody working, he'll go make a phone call, and picketers will suddenly roll up, 10 to a battered pickup truck, and begin chanting their slogan: "*Si, Se Puede!*"—"Yes, It Can Be Done!"

Across the street, a big white apartment building is under construction. There's another one behind it.

"I did that one," he nods at the finished building. "It was four or five years ago, and I got paid twice what these guys are making now for the same work.

"We're being squeezed to death," he says. "A guy I know, his wife left him when the money started drying up. Pretty soon we won't even be able to support our wives and kids."

As the housing market went off a cliff in 1989, the home builders began to pinch the subcontractors, who turned around and pinched wages so hard that even the low-paid Mexican workers began to complain.

It was their own people, some of them from El Maguey, even, who helped exploit them. The new non-union system created a group of labor brokers—or, as some people call them, "labor barons"—who rounded up Mexican workers and supplied them to the subcontractors.

The labor barons acted as go-betweens for the companies and the men. Often, the men say, the barons cheated them. And the barons often paid in cash, cheating the government out of income taxes, Social Security and workers' compensation payments too. The men had no benefits, no health insurance, no vacation, while the barons drove Mercedeses and lived in big homes.

"These guys control your shop," says Joe Sayatovich of Sayatovich Drywall Interiors in the San Diego County town of Lakeside, who says his company doesn't use any barons. "The guy says who works and who doesn't. He runs the whole show."

Construction—and the drywall business in particular—are notorious for paying cash.

"Cash pay is rampant, particularly in construction," said a 1989 report by the Orange County Human Relations Commission on the underground economy entitled "Zero Dollars Per Hour."

Cash pay means unscrupulous contractors can edge out their law-abiding competitors in bidding on jobs; it leaves workers with no insurance or pension; and it diverts as much as $2 billion in income tax alone from government coffers, the report estimates.

When there were still many Anglo workers in the business, drywall installers were a hard-drinking, hard-partying bunch, and it was common for men to be paid not only in cash but in drugs, such as cocaine, the Human Relations Commission report says.

The state Employment Development Department and the federal Internal Revenue Service launched, with great fanfare, an investigation of cash payments in the drywall industry in Southern California in 1989. But little came of it.

"We've never been able to get the support of the industry to clean this problem up," says Loren Ferguson, an administrator in the tax enforcement section.

"And short of auditing everybody, getting some support is the only way we're going to be able to do it."

There's another irony in all this: With the walkout a month old, the subcontractors are bringing onto their job sites still more Mexicans. These are men who have been washing dishes for even less money than drywall hanging pays and who have never hung drywall in their life. The subcontractors also say they're recruiting experienced drywall hangers from Northern California and other states.

As the strike wears on into a second month, both sides remain far apart, circling warily to see who will cave in first. The drywall companies adamantly refuse to recognize a union again, and the men refuse to go back to work without one.

would soon take back any wage gains they have to offer to lure the men back to work. The contractors have done that twice before, the men say, the last time during a walkout in 1987.

Even though they began saving money and storing food weeks before the strike began June 1, those meager stockpiles are dwindling. At a borrowed union hall in Orange, donated beans and potatoes pour in from the local Latino community, and the men make beans and tortillas for each other at lunch each day to save money. In desperation, some of them have turned to trashing drywall and breaking windows in half-finished homes, fairly typical actions for a strike in the building industry.

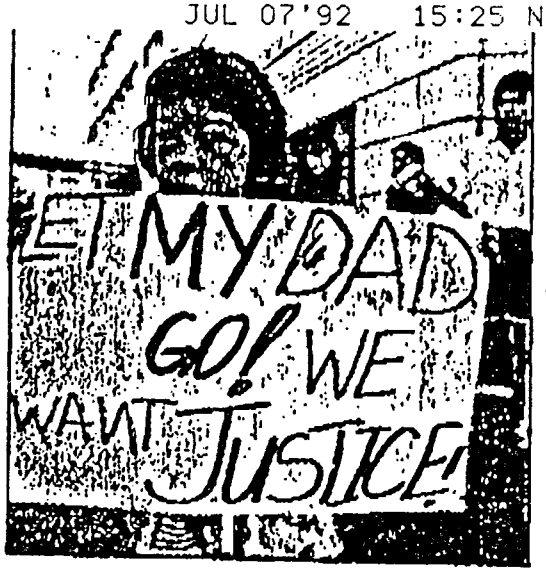
They won't, they say, go back to the old way.

"These men finally realize they have to get out of the underground economy," says Jesus Gomez, another El Maguey man and a leader of the strike. He started this whole affair in November when, he says, he got fed up with the system after a labor baron cheated him out of $60.

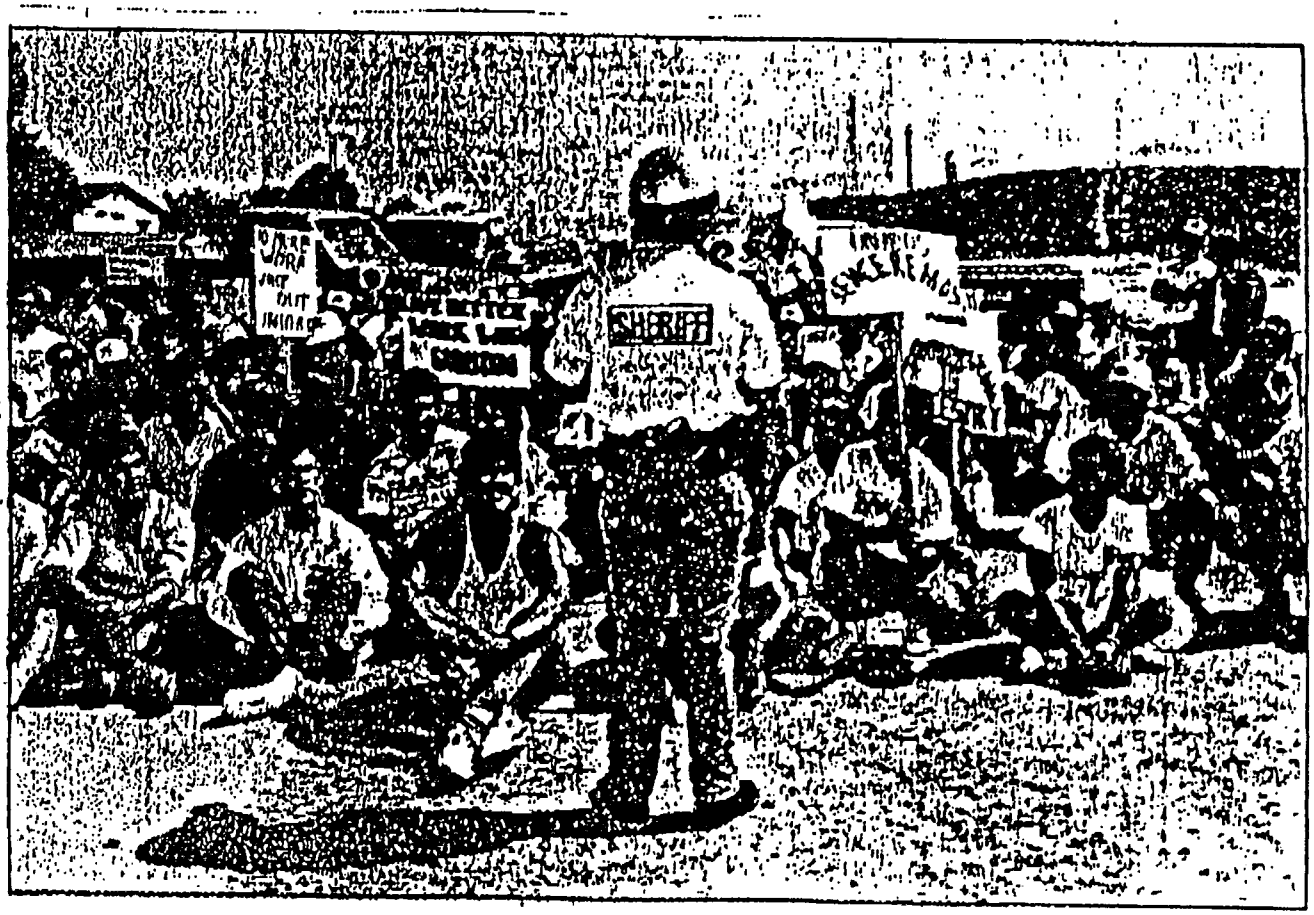
"There may be fewer jobs when all this is over, but at least they'll be decent ones," he says

As for the man who *really* started it all by being the first El Maguey man to get a job in the drywall industry, 54-year-old Juan Valadez has had his own small drywall company in Fullerton for the last five years.

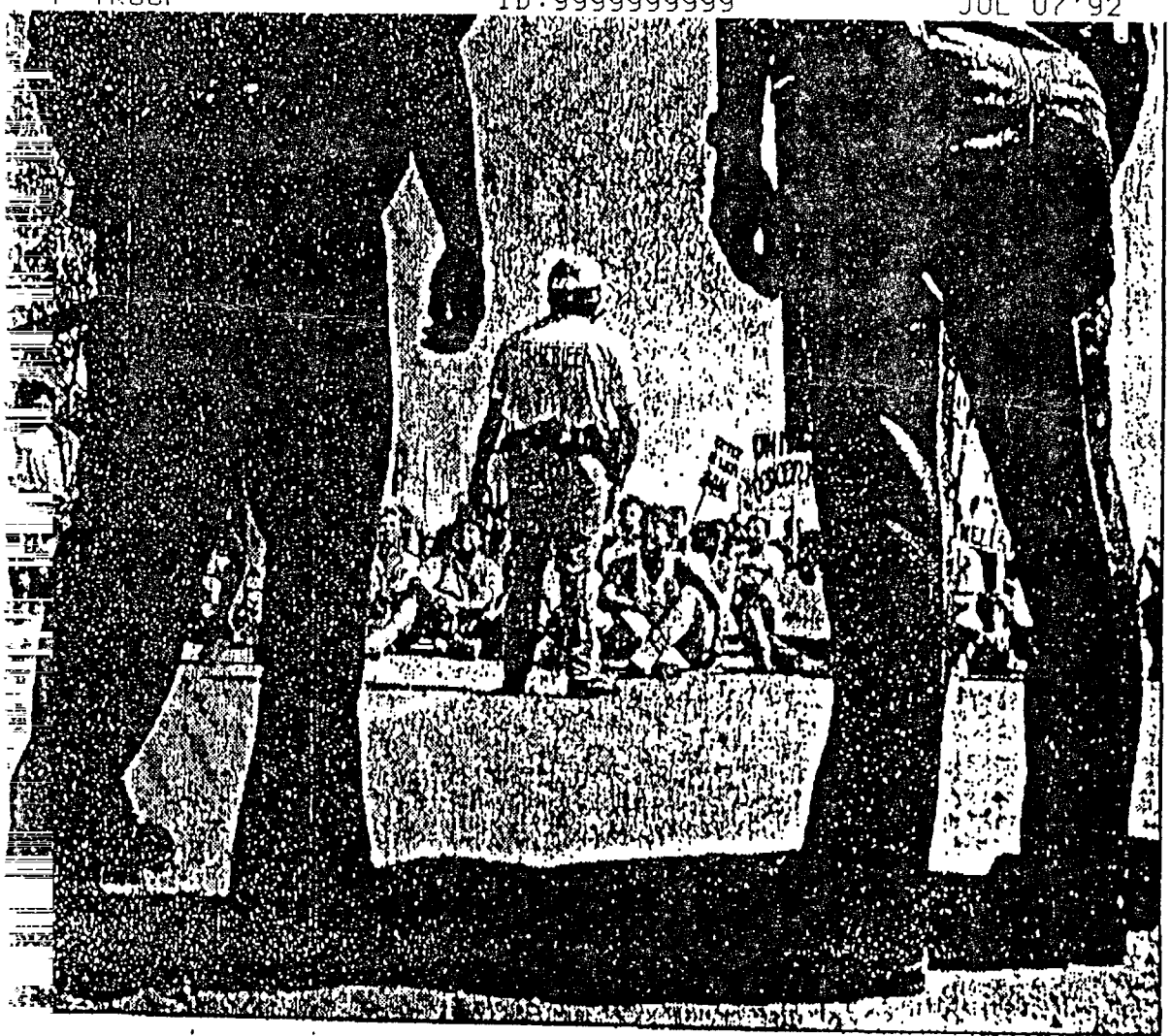
"Why would I go back to Mexico now?" he says. "All my kids are here. This is where I live."



Seven-year-old Mariela Segura takes part in a protest at Orange County Jail, hoping to win her father's freedom. Protesters called for the release of 149 striking drywallers who were arrested Thursday by deputies after the men allegedly kidnaped workers from a construction site in Mission Viejo. A deputy, right, confronts strikers on Olympiad Road in Mission Viejo just before they were arrested Thursday.



MARK BOSTER/ Los Angeles Times



MARK BOSTER / Los Angeles Times

eputies explain to strikers that they'll be arrested if they refuse to move from road in Mission Viejo.

GINNY DIXON / Los Angeles Times

Protesters try to lure workers at job site June 11.

Striking drywall workers may be replaced

By FERNANDO ROMERO
Staff Writer

Saying they are fed up with the alleged intimidation tactics of striking drywall workers and their refusal to accept an agreement, local subcontractors will begin a nationwide advertising campaign today to attract replacement workers.

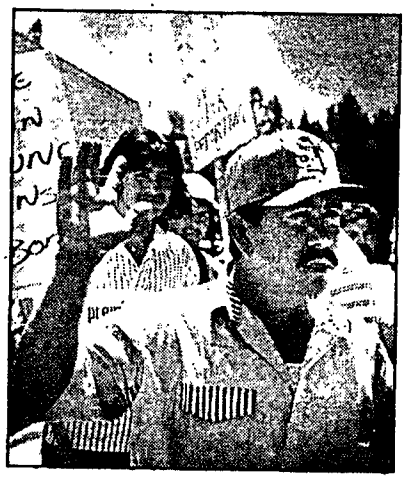
Joe Sayatovich, spokesman for the subcontractors, said the 25-member group will meet today with most of San Diego County's large building contractors to "discuss how we can go about getting the job done."

As part of that effort, he said, beginning today "we will blanket-advertise throughout the U.S., in every major city" to attract replacements for the 1,800 non-union drywallers who went on strike June 1 to protest low wages and lack of health benefits.

Sayatovich claimed the strikers have intimidated workers out of voting for a fair agreement. He also claimed some of the strikers' leaders belong to the local Carpenters Union, which he said is behind the strikers' movement.

But Tony Hernandez, a strikers' representative and one of the leaders Sayatovich claims belongs to the Carpenters Union, denied the allegations.

Hernandez said he hasn't belonged to the Carpenters Union since 1984. Moreover, he said, the union has had no role in the drywallers' strike.



Union-Tribune/GERALD McCLARD

Protest: *Drywall workers' representative Luciano Salazar and about 150 other workers picket newspaper offices yesterday.*

As for the allegation some of the strikers were intimidated so that they would not vote for an agreement, Hernandez said, "We didn't intimidate nobody — if some people didn't vote it was because they were not paying attention."

Hernandez admitted, however, that the strikers did not allow so-called brokers, people who hire workers on behalf of subcontractors, to vote. The reason for that, he said, is because brokers are clearly biased in favor of the subcontractors.

On Wednesday, the striking drywallers rejected a subcontractors' offer that would have increased their wages from 5.5 cents per square foot to 6.5 cents, followed by a half-cent increase in October. By a margin of 295 to 183, the drywallers decided to continue the walkout until their demands, which include health benefits and overtime pay, are met.

A news report that a subcontractors' offer paying 8 cents per square foot was turned down by the drywallers was vehemently denied by the strikers' representatives. In fact, the report, published by *The San Diego Union-Tribune* yesterday, triggered a protest at the paper.

About 150 of the strikers picketed the newspaper's Mission Valley offices yesterday at midday protesting what they claim is biased reporting favoring the subcontractors.

The protesters disputed a story in yesterday's editions that quoted Sayatovich saying that subcontractors "talked about boosting wages to 8 cents per square foot for drywall hangers (but) the labor leaders rejected" the offer.

It was the subcontractors, said Luciano Salazar, one of the leaders of picketers, who "completely refused to negotiate" such terms.

However, this was not noted in the story, Salazar said.

"We were not asked by the reporter if the (8-cent) offer was made by the subcontractors," said Salazar. "If he would have (talked to the strikers), he would have found out that (subcontractors) completely refused to negotiate."

David Coburn, the newspaper's executive business editor, said the reporter made several efforts to reach the strikers' representatives on Wednesday, to no avail.

"We didn't intend to present a biased story," Coburn said. "We make every effort to give balanced reporting."

The protesters were also angry at the paper for publishing a story in which an unidentified North County subcontractor alleged 150 of the strikers invaded a construction site in Carmel Mountain Ranch June 22 and "stole more than $3,000 worth of tools . . . to intimidate workers and disrupt construction."

Salazar said the strikers had indeed stormed the job site and had taken the tools outside the building "to force the scabs to stop working, but we did not steal anything."

The tools were later returned to the workers.

7-8-92 ORANGE County

Some Drywallers Freed; Most Face Deportation

■ **Labor:** More than 50 strikers released on own recognizance, but at least 88 are refused bail at request of immigration officials.

By MICHAEL FLAGG and LEN HALL
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

LAGUNA NIGUEL—More than 50 striking drywall workers who were arrested last week after storming a construction site have been released on their own recognizance, leaving nearly 100 others still in custody, many of them facing probable deportation.

Hearings on whether the 149 workers should be tried on trespassing charges begin Thursday.

The workers—all Mexican immigrants—walked off their jobs five weeks ago demanding a union and better wages than the $300 they say they average now for a 60-hour week for installing plasterboard on the frames of new homes.

All 149 of the strikers turned down a plea bargain Monday that would have let them go free in return for the five days they had already spent in jail.

The decision surprised prosecutors and even some defense lawyers.

But for one arrested striker, Pedro Segura, 37, the decision to turn down the plea agreement was very simple, he said Tuesday after being released.

"I don't really believe I was guilty or at fault here," he said. "I was protesting our

Please see DRYWALL, B12

DRYWALL: Most Face Deportation

Continued from B1

poor pay, so why should I plead guilty to something?"

When the strikers refused to plead guilty, a Municipal Court judge set bail at what defense lawyers said was an unusually high amount of $10,000 each.

It looked as if all 149 men might be in jail until late July or early August awaiting a trial. But then two other judges lowered bail to $1,000 or $2,500 for a handful of men and released 53 others on their own recognizance in a series of hearings that began early Monday afternoon and continued into the night.

An exact count was still not available Tuesday, but court officials said at least an additional eight men were granted bail. Sheriff's Department officials said most of those men had probably not yet been released from jail because they hadn't been able to post the bail.

Of the 96 or so who remained in jail Tuesday, 88 were not granted bail because the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service says they're illegal immigrants and that it will deport them when their cases are resolved.

Some defense lawyers contend that the legal system and the INS are being used to help builder contractors crush the strike. INS officials say they routinely screen bookings at the jail, which is how they found these 88 men.

At any rate, the courts Tuesday were left with what could become a logistical nightmare in sorting out the largest mass arrest in the county in recent memory.

"The costs will be tremendous," said Carl C. Holmes, chief deputy public defender. "There'll be many, many lawyers involved, many interpreters and many court days—unnecessarily so."

Trial dates have been scheduled for July 28 and Aug. 4, with the

'I don't really believe I was guilty or at fault here. I was protesting our poor pay, so why should I plead guilty to something?'

PEDRO SEGURA
Striker who refused plea bargain

Holmes said it's likely each man will need his own lawyer. Prosecutors disagree.

The strikers, meanwhile, had to figure out how to turn all the attention into sympathy for their strike. That's not an easy job since the strike has been marred by violence and vandalism for the last two weeks.

The mass arrests occurred Thursday morning after the men allegedly raced onto a Brighton Homes construction site in Mission Viejo and forced six non-striking drywall workers to come with them.

Deputies stopped the caravan of trucks and cars on a little-traveled stretch of Olympiad Road a few minutes later.

After a tense standoff, deputies arrested the strikers on suspicion of conspiracy to commit kidnaping, a felony. They were held over the holiday weekend on $50,000 bail each. Prosecutors then said Monday they didn't have enough evidence to charge the men with kidnaping and reduced the charge to trespassing, a misdemeanor that carries a maximum $1,000 fine and a six-month jail sentence.

Public defenders, however, pointed out that many people who commit more serious misdemeanors are routinely issued a citation and released by police rather than spend five days or more in jail.

Replied Deputy Dist. Atty Wallace J. Wade: "We made what we thought was a fair offer, and they turned us down."

Wade said an investigation continues and it's possible that some of the men may be charged again with felonies. The Sheriff's Department has a tape it made of a raid on a building site a day earlier "that shows the kind of activity the deputies had to deal with on Thursday," Wade said.

Meanwhile the home builders' trade group, the Building Industry Assn. of Southern California, broke more than a month's silence on the strike. A spokesman said Tuesday that an informal poll of builders who came to a meeting on the strike showed they are adamantly opposed to being unionized.

That means prospects for a quick settlement remain dim. That's because the home builders' subcontractors are unlikely to sign union contracts if they think they can be underbid by non-union competitors.

Times staff writer David Reyes contributed to this report.

SECTION B
WEDNESDAY
JULY 8, 1992 CC†

ORANGE COUNTY

Jailed Workers We Should All Be in Solidarity With

DANA PARSONS

Hey, what's with you guys? Can't you follow a simple script? Let's go over this one more time: Look, you hang drywall. You bust your hump all week and make peanuts. Most of you come from Mexico. Some are in this country legally, some not. In any case, don't cause trouble.

Then there are home builders who hire you. They're the ones with the boats and the martinis. They live in the houses you build. They have the friends in high places.

As you can see, there are only two roles in this drama: Them That Got and Them That Ain't.

Guess which ones you are?

Well, a funny thing happened last week when these guys were supposed to take it in the neck one more time—this time they said: "We're not taking it, we're standing our ground."

That's come as quite a shock, what with the police, Sheriff's Department and district attorney's office seemingly all arrayed against them.

The story line is this: 149 non-unionized drywall workers, striking for the past several weeks for higher pay and for benefits, were arrested Thursday for allegedly storming a Mission Viejo construction site and harassing some non-striking workers.

All 149 initially were held on $50,000 bail each while prosecutors supposedly considered kidnaping charges against them. While the men remained in jail over the Fourth of July weekend, the

Please see PARSONS, B8

PARSONS

Continued from B1

kidnap charade was dropped, and each was given a chance to be released in exchange for pleading guilty to trespassing.

That offer came after a visit from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, carrying the ultimate threat of a deportation trip back to Mexico for those without their documentation.

Sufficiently apprised of the powers aligned against them, the strikers were expected to follow the script and slink away.

Instead, they all rejected the plea, deciding instead to rally around their demand for better wages and benefits.

I repeat, what's with these guys? Don't they know the dangers of helping expose the hypocrisy that surrounds their situation?

Oh, you didn't know there were illegal immigrants working in the reputable industries?

I see.

Well, don't let me burst your bubble. Perhaps you also think this would be a grand chance for the INS, if it's truly concerned about illegal immigrants in the work force, to question the arrestees about who their employers are and how many other undocumented workers they employ.

Yeah, right.

Then, there's the expose of "Pedro" and what a drain he is on society, as certain politicians got mileage out of discussing when they needed a cheap vote before the June primary.

Well, whaddya know? Turns out Pedro is breaking his back with 150-pound hunks of drywall, working seven-day weeks at wages less than paid 10 years ago so people can live comfortably in Mission Viejo. If Pedro and his brothers are living two and three families to a housing unit in your town, his wages may have something to do with it.

Or, rather than buying into what a drain he is, consider that Pedro follows a long line of immigrant workers trying to make a decent living. "You don't have quote unquote illegal immigrants dominating any industry that doesn't want them to," says Mike Potts, head of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Orange County. "These guys are merely the effects of what the industry does to itself."

These arrested men are incarnations of what used to be considered the emerging middle class, the group whose vanishing presence red-blooded Americans claim they regret. Those lower-class workers [yep, your granddaddy] of yesteryear became middle class because they demanded, and eventually got, decent wages and living conditions from employers.

In America's frontier days, Chinese coolies and European immigrants helped lay the track that let the railroad companies get rich. Just dub in home builders for railroad companies, and you get the idea.

Potts says the arrested men will continue the fight until they've unionized.

"These guys are right back to the very roots of the thing, where there was no union and guys got together and decided to form one," says Potts. "This isn't a union-organizing drive, like in a factory where it's professionally run. These guys are starting right from the bottom."

If you had to bet on either a group of Mexican and Central American drywallers or the Orange County housing industry, you know where the smart money should go.

But if you decry the striking workers, ask yourself who's paying for their health care if the employers aren't and who's paying the social price when a worker can't afford housing for his family.

Then ask yourself what a better wage would do for them and out of whose pocket it would, and should, come.

I'd say the people with the boats and the martinis.

Dana Parsons' column appears Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. Readers may reach Parsons by writing to him at The Times Orange County Edition, 1375 Sunflower Ave., Costa Mesa, Calif. 92626, or calling (714) 966-7821.

HAVE HAIR

Drywall workers to vote today on wage-hike proposal

y L. ERIK BRATT
taff Writer

Striking drywall workers were cheduled to vote this morning on wage increase proposal that ould send them back to work fter walking off the job more nan three weeks ago.

Local drywall subcontractors et with labor leaders yesterday orning at the Associated Builders and Contractors headquarters in North Park and offered an immediate 25 percent wage increase, to be followed by another 8 percent boost in October.

The meetings yesterday and on Monday were the first time management and labor has sat down together to negotiate a resolution.

Tomas Garcia, one of six labor representatives, said more than 300 drywall hangers and tapers will vote on the wage-increase package this morning at an unspecified location in San Diego.

Given the number of people who are working already, Garcia predicted workers might approve the package by a slim margin even though they are still not satisfied with the wage increases.

"They have to go back to work," said Garcia. "Some guys cannot pay rent or buy food."

Nearly 1,800 drywallers walked off the job June 1 to protest low wages and the lack of health benefits. The workers, most of them Hispanics, complained of discriminatory pay cuts that their Anglo co-workers had not been required to accept. The move was coordinated with workers in other Southern California counties. Garcia estimated 750 to 1,000 laborers are still on strike here.

The walkout has hampered construction at an estimated 125 residential projects in San Diego County, putting some 25 drywall companies under heavy pressure from developers.

"They are canceling contracts left and right or threatening to sue us," said Hal Moore of Great Western Drywall in the Miramar area.

The subcontractors, who formed the San Diego County Drywall Association three weeks ago in response to the walkout, hope the package they presented to labor representatives will be enough to get picketers back to work.

The package does not address health benefits, but Moore said employers are willing to discuss the issue in the months ahead.

In return for the wage increases, the association requests labor's cooperation in setting up a job hot line, an apprentice program and a special committee to address any future problems between the two parties.

If laborers reject the package, Joe Sayatovich of Sayatovich Drywall Interiors in Lakeside said the subcontractors would be forced to recruit workers from job sites in Arizona and other locations.

Negotiation between management and labor comes at a time when frustration is running high on both sides. Scattered incidents of violence and job disruptions were reported from North County to Chula Vista.

One North County drywall subcontractor, who wished to remain anonymous, said 150 picketers stormed a job site in Carmel Mountain Ranch on Monday and stole more than $3,000 worth of tools in an effort to intimidate workers and disrupt construction.

In Chula Vista, police arrested four picketers Monday on battery charges for allegedly attacking the foreman of a construction site. Strikers kidnapped one worker off a site in Temecula, said one drywaller who preferred to remain unidentified.

Garcia did not condone the recent violence and said labor representatives had nothing to do with it.

"Some of the guys are not well-educated," he said. "They think by showing violence, they will (get) other workers to join us. We don't have anything to do with it."

Garcia also rejected claims by the subcontractors that they are being influenced by a local carpenters union in a bid to gain membership. Officials for the Los Angeles County Carpenters District Council on Mercury Street in San Diego declined to comment.

Dow Jones Index
Index of industrial stocks

...travelers would have | the New York Stock Exchange

...higher interest rates, and certain-

Free enterprise not such a great system

CHARLEY REESE

Many people who crow about the virtues of free enterprise couldn't stand it if they were forced to live under it.

One reason to teach an unexpurgated version of history is to help dispense with the myths of the good old days. Typically free enterprise boosters and even some libertarians construct a fairy tale version of history that focuses on the success stories of the industrial revolution.

There were success stories, but it was a world far too harsh for most people. If you think animals are treated cruelly today, you should have seen how people fared in the great old days of laissez faire.

There was little or no regard for worker safety or health and if you got sick or injured, you were on your own. If your family couldn't provide for you, then you could die in the street or become a beggar. Health care didn't cost much because there wasn't much health care, but what there was cost more than most people could afford.

Twelve-hour days, six-day workweeks for a pittance of wages with no benefits were common. There was no workmen's compensation, no unemployment insurance, no public welfare to speak of, no Medicaid, no Medicare, no Social Security. It was literally a survival of the strongest system. If you were unlucky or suffered a mishap that made you less able to compete, you just became a casualty and the rest of society stepped over your body.

Such a system produced hard, tough people, of which I see few these days. Typically the soft-handed youth complaining about the necessity to get government off his back has actually ridden on the back of government — through public schools, public universities, often with public subsidies.

Typically, he disdains the union man but not the higher wages, the better benefits, the worker's comp, the protection of unemployment insurance that most assuredly would not be there but for those union men who struggled and fought and often died to make them a reality.

In his naivete and ignorance, he imagines that his corporate employers shower benefits on him because of his virtue or because they are filled with compassion and generosity.

One day, he may have his illusions shattered. The union movement in America today is on the ropes — one after another is being broken. When it's gone, when corporations no longer face the possibility of having to deal with unions, then the free enterprise ideologues will find out the hard way just where they stand in the eyes of those who inhabit corporate boardrooms. If compassion were sweat, you couldn't find enough in most boardrooms to wet down an ant.

Furthermore, as the history of American business and industry shows, nobody hates competition more than big businessmen. When left alone, they almost always try to kill off their competition, and if they can't do that, they get together to fix prices and apportion the market to maximize their profits.

History shows the great corrupters of public officials have not been the Mafia or drug dealers — they deal with relatively petty-level officials like cops, prosecutors and judges — but big business, mainly financiers and bankers, who buy governors, congressmen, senators, presidents, and legislatures.

I am not a socialist but I have no illusions about so-called free enterprise. The only way to balance the power of money is with honest government. Our goal should be neither ideological socialism nor ideological free enterprise but rather a just and prosperous society.

Unfettered free enterprise is just as tyrannical and unjust as unfettered government. Power, whether the power of the gun or the power of the purse, can corrupt. The never-ending task is to balance the benefits of private enterprise and government without allowing either to trample on our rights or exploit us. It ain't easy.

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PLANT CITIZEN APR 16 1992

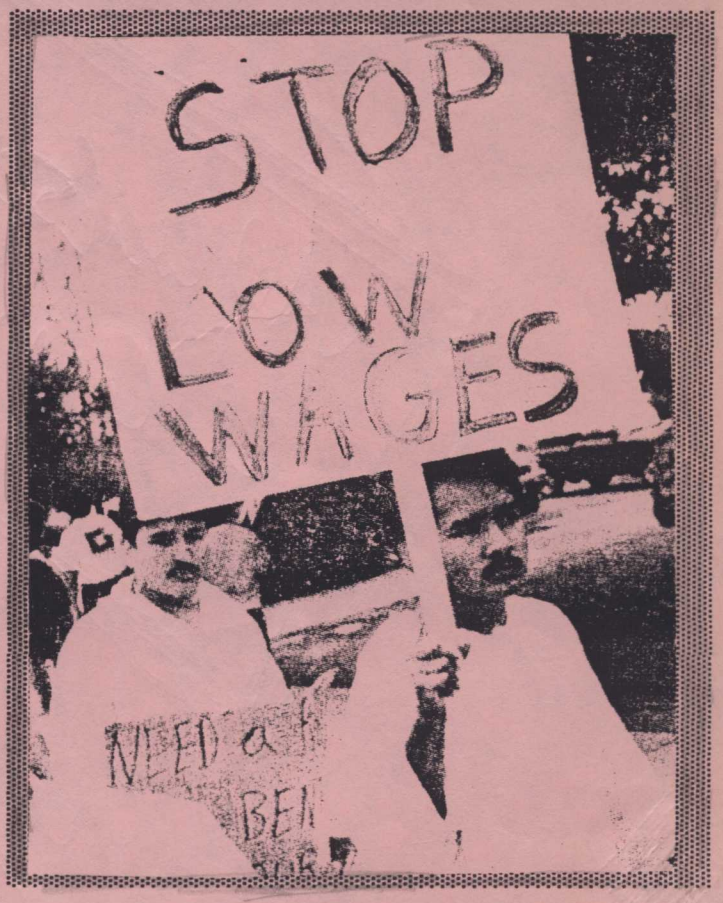
SUPPORT THE DRYWALLERS STRIKE!

Over one thousand Mexican Drywall workers are on strike through out southern California. They have effectively closed down almost all residential home construction from Los Angeles to the border.

These previously non-union workers are demanding union recognition, a living wage and benefits to cover themselves and their families.

They have faced racist abuse from their employers, harassment from the police and the Border Patrol, and lies spread about them in the media.

Come hear **Tony Hernandez** , a rank-and-file spokesperson for the San Diego **Justice for Drywallers** campaign, to discuss the history of their struggle and what we can do to support them.



Thursday July 23 1:00 P.M.
Santa Barbara Rm. Price Center - UCSD

sponsored by

International Socialist Club
Voz Fronteriza

Justice for Drywallers, Tapers & Hangers

STRIKE BULLETIN

Covering Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernadino, Riverside & San Diego Counties

Vol. 1 Issue 1. Voice of Justice for Drywallers, Tapers & Hangers August 19,1992

Over 500 March in Support of Strike

Rally mobilizes strikers & supporters to demand union recognition from contractors

Over 500 members and supporters of Justice for Drywallers, Tapers & Hangers rallied on Saturday August 8 in Chicano Park to commemorate the second month anniversary of the strike against drywall contractors in Southern California. Drywallers and supporters also marched to police headquarters to protest police harassment of strikers.

Tony Hernandez and Roy Navarro represented the strikers at the rally and were joined by representatives of the Service Employees International Union, the San Diego Labor Council, Hermandad Mexicana Nacional, Raza Rights Coalition, Una Lucha del Pueblo and the Drywallers Support Committee.

Photo by Adolfo Guzman Lopez

J&S Supervisor Shoots at Strikers in San Diego

On Tuesday, August 11, Robert Connelly, a supervisor for J&S Builders, fired at members of Justice for Drywallers as they picketed a construction site in Rancho Penasquitos.

After much protest San Diego police arrested Connelly, but also arrested four strikers on trumped-up charges of assault.

Charges against the four Justice for Drywallers members were dropped, but the charges against Connelly were also dropped! Despite the fact that dozens of witnesses saw him draw his weapon and fire!

This is just another example of the double standard of Justice that is applied to us. Stop company and scab violence! Stop Police harassment!

Justice for Drywallers, Tapers & Hangers

Elected Officers

Jesus Gomez - *President*
Tony Hernandez - *Secretary*
Antonio Vasquez - *Treasurer*

Trustees

Jose Castillo, Roy Navarro, Beltram Arellano, Juan Puga

For Information on Justice for Drywallers call:
In Los Angeles: 818-448-8304
In San Diego: 619-495-7023
In Orange County: 714-937-9911
For more info on Justice for Drywallers Support Committee call: Joe at 619-292-1046

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, August 18, 4:00 P.M.
Rally in support of Drywallers and their families in the fight for Justice.
Placita Olvera
Los Angeles.
Call 213-728-8369 for more info.

Thursday,August 20
7-9:00 A.M
Picket A.B.C. (hiring hall for scabs)
4152 30th St. (near El Cajon Blvd) San Diego.
Call 619-495-7023 for more info.

Weekly Meeting of Justice for Drywallers Support Committee:
6:00 P.M., 4665 Mercury St., San Diego.
Call 619-495-7023 for more info.